

**Allendale Association Foster Care
Implementation Plan
2017**

A. FOSTER PARENTS RIGHTS

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

Key concepts:

- Recognition of Foster Parents unique expertise and experiences with children and the Child Welfare System is achieved by inclusion of the Foster Parents as members of the child's treatment team.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency acknowledges the Foster Parents unique expertise and experience through inclusion of them as members of the treatment team and involvement in the planning process and meetings for the youth.
- The agency recognizes their years of service and participation in formal recognition events.
- The agency works with the family to develop crisis plans and transition plans and support the parenting decisions of the Foster Parents.
- The agency invites feedback from foster parents at any time on the program and on a quarterly basis formally asks for foster parents to complete satisfaction surveys

Foster Parents have a central role in the treatment team. They frequently engage in dialogues with case workers, clinicians, educators, and medical professionals working with the youth in their care. Foster Parents provide insight into assessment of needs and service plan development and are integral to then monitoring how the youth is adjusting to community supports and treatment services. Foster parents are encouraged to pro-actively address issues or behaviors with the team as they arise in weekly visits with the case worker, quarterly staffing's, clinical consultation conferences or in meetings they request. Clinical consultation is regularly scheduled (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) phone meetings with treatment team members (foster parents, biological parents, teachers/school social workers, therapists, CASA, GAL, caseworkers, program manager, clinical director, etc.) where the focus is to identify issues and develop plans toward successful placement stabilization and achievement of the permanency goal. An alliance is forged among the treatment team members, including the foster parent, by having a shared understanding of the permanency goal and an agreement about the tasks to move toward that goal.

The staff of the Foster Care Program at the Allendale Association are trained to embrace the foster parents as treatment team providers and expected to establish excellent professional relationships with the foster family. Staff engage in dialogues with supervisors in weekly one-on-one supervision, weekly programmatic team meetings which include clinical discussions, as well as monthly clinical case staffing. It is during these trainings and dialogues that foster care staff discuss how they incorporate foster parents as professional team members, examine how they respond to them as team members, and are guided on how to look internally within themselves as staff members to identify any barriers we have with working with a foster parent (beginning in the licensing process and throughout placement) that may impact the foster parents success as a team member. Staff in-service training addresses the expectation of mutual respect as a member of the child welfare team. Additionally, staffs are expected to provide post-adoption support for all families, regardless how much time has passed since case management services ended.

Here are a few concrete ways that the program relates to foster parents with dignity and respect:

- Returning phone calls within 48 hours, for non-crisis issues
- Having the Director and Program Manager on 3-way conference calls to consult on crisis issues after hours when 24/7 on-call is accessed
- Asking about how they are doing and what we can do to support them as a parent and family member
- Calling foster parents to inquire about stressful family events when they occur (i.e. loss of a relative, child hospitalization, non-foster child family illness, etc.), asking about needs, and offering support (i.e. gift cards for meals, transportation, phone calls, respite, etc.)
- Scheduling Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs) at convenient times for foster parents, including evenings, and offering CFTMs in the foster home, if it is appropriate for permanency planning (adoption or guardianship is the goal)
- Offering clinical consultation regularly and at convenient times (i.e. 7:30 a.m. or 7 p.m., on opposite weeks to bi-weekly family therapy, etc.)
- Providing transportation support for medical appointments for parents who work or have other conflicting responsibilities

Foster parents are instrumental in the decision-making process regarding the child's needs, placement planning, particularly as it relates to their level of care. For example, the foster care staffs prepare foster parents to participate in DCFS Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings. Foster parent's are invited to share their observations of the stressors for the child, their observations and understanding of the reoccurring patterns in relating to the child which can be linked to their trauma history (trauma re-enactment), and in identifying what kind of interventions are most effective in reducing referral problems of the child. Foster parent involvement is critical to placement preservation, treatment planning and attaining permanency for foster children.

On a quarterly basis, all foster parents are surveyed regarding their experiences with foster care staff and agency services. Responses to the surveys are closely reviewed to identify issues that need attention (i.e. relationship issues, case management or service issues, clarification or modification of procedures, etc.). Results of these surveys are one element of Allendale's overall quality assurance program, which monitors both caseworker and program accountability. Also, during monthly training in-services, providing networking time beforehand with the Director and Program Manager available to answer questions and to invite feedback on how to improve the program services.

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

Key concepts:

- Foster Parent Training begins in the licensing process through Initial Training provided by DCFS and an Orientation to the agency.
- Resources for continuing education hours with credentialed trainers are made available to Foster Parents throughout the year. (Example: the training schedule for the Allendale Association; lists of other DCFS-approved trainings provided to Foster Parents annually)

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency connects new Foster Parents to the DCFS pre-service training program called PRIDE and also to the Educational Advocacy course sponsored by DCFS.
- The staff of the Foster Care Program provides new Foster Parents a full Orientation to the agency and to policies and procedures of the program.
- Foster Parent Training sessions offered 9 months of the year
- Foster Parent networking time scheduled before monthly training sessions with a meal and childcare available
- New Foster Parents or Foster Parents in new situations are given an opportunity to have a Foster Parent Mentor (a Foster Parent with experience who will assist them throughout the training and orientation and to provide additional assistance during the initial placement).
- Agency staff assists foster parents with developing an individualized training plan.

The Department of Children and Family Services requires, per Rule 402, that all parties interested in becoming licensed foster parents, participate in the standardized PRIDE pre-service training, either independently or in cooperation with DCFS and/or other private agencies. Once potential foster parents have expressed their intent to become licensed, Allendale's program staff assists them in enrolling in this training experience. PRIDE training teams composed of a combination of experienced, licensed foster parents and child welfare professionals work closely with Allendale's Specialized Foster Care program and prospective foster parents, aiding both in assessing additional training wants and needs.

Training addresses a variety of issues, including emotional and behavioral needs, physical ailments and other challenges that foster children may bring to a foster home, along with strategies for managing such challenges.

Training needs are assessed in several ways to address the immediate and continuing needs of children and foster parents. At an annual meeting Foster Parents are invited to talk about the training program that was offered during the year. Foster parents are asked to provide feedback on what they learned from the training, what is useful to them, what modifications are desired (i.e. training format, content, delivery, presenters, scheduling, etc.) are requested. Since the program is comprised primarily of specialized foster children, a review of the kinds of emotional, behavioral, and medical issues of children referred to the program and those currently in the program is conducted with attention to whether the training provided offers foster parents the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of the children in care. Their insights are valued and incorporated into the training program development for the coming training year (September through May). This review is typically held at the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Event to maximize attendance and participation in this process. Announcements for agency-sponsored training are mailed out at least one month prior to the training. Follow-up phone calls are made to foster homes one week prior to the training. During semi-annual and annual monitoring visits, licensing staff invite foster parents to review their training. An individualized training plan form is utilized to assess their training needs and the needs of the children in their care and to identify where training will be accessed. Other resources for training are identified if the training is need promptly and not readily available on the upcoming training calendar. The plan includes how to remain current on required training hours and is jointly developed and signed by the foster parent and licensing staff. In addition to the individualized training plans, topics for Allendale training sessions are identified during regular home visits and quarterly Child and Family Team meetings. Throughout the year, foster parents are invited to complete evaluation forms at the conclusion of monthly trainings and to offer suggestions for future trainings. This feedback is reviewed by the Foster Care staff and discussed in Foster Care team meeting to understand what is most helpful to foster parents.

The Director of Clinical and Community Services and the Foster Care Team – including Foster Parents - identify speakers and professionals with expertise on the topics of interest. If there are foster parents with expertise on the topic of interest they are invited to be a presenter or co-presenter on that topic. All invited speakers are screened to ensure that foster parents will be addressed as equal partners in the treatment planning and delivery process and that foster parents' expertise will be drawn upon for a meaningful discussion of the topic of interest. Speakers are to submit their materials prior to the in-service and to discuss how they will invite foster parents to share their knowledge and examples to illustrate the concepts and clinical points. In this way foster parents are invited to dialogue on the topics of interest and be actively involved in learning the material. In addition, Allendale assists foster parents in completing Allendale sponsored trainings hours by providing day care and an evening

meal. Upon completion of Allendale trainings, foster parents receive a Certificate of Participation and notification is sent to the state training liaison to assure credit is appropriately documented for licensure renewal. Foster Parents are given information on the DCFS Virtual Training Center login to track the reporting of their training hours by the agency. Foster Parents are also given information on new trainings offered locally, statewide, and nationally and the Lending Library and DCFS-sponsored in-service trainings.

During agency pre-service training, foster parents are given information regarding the training and support services of the Illinois Foster Parent Association with contact information provided in the agency's foster parent handbook. New foster parents at Allendale are also afforded another, less formal, level of training and support. Recognizing that, at times, the most current and practical information available originates with those who are actively fostering, certain experienced Allendale foster parents have volunteered to be matched with newly licensed foster parents to provide mentoring. Experienced foster parents are invaluable sources of information around a wide range of topics critical to fostering such as: what recreational activities are available to foster children in the community free of charge; how do foster parents access the local food collective to obtain groceries at reduced rates; what behavioral management techniques have been particularly helpful in addressing problematic behaviors. Scheduled networking opportunities also occur monthly at training events and during the annual recognition/appreciation event to honor their service to the youth of the Allendale Association. These opportunities provide foster parents time for fellowship and networking with each other

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

Key concepts:

- Foster Parents have the right to easy access to Support Services and contact information regarding the children in their care.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Almost weekly visits by staff to the foster home for specialized foster children
- The agency provides a Contact Sheet with numbers for the Case Worker, Agency 24 hour On-Call Line, and members of the child's treatment team
- The Foster Parent Handbook has SASS, Healthworks, and other resource information
- The agency gathers contact information for community resources and shares the lists with foster parents.

During Allendale's pre-service training every foster home receives an Allendale organizational chart, resource list, and information around after-hours emergency numbers. Allendale provides a 24-hour/ 7 day per week, on-call foster care worker

available to provide emergency support to the foster home as needed. In addition, an on-call supervisor and the Director of Clinical and Community Services are also available to provide further assistance during times of crisis. On call staff also assist foster parents in accessing external services such as SASS when necessary.

As part of the foster care treatment team, foster parents have several avenues for identifying and accessing supportive services. Within thirty days of placement, foster parents are invited to participate in a Child and Family Team meeting where the youth's service needs are reviewed and any needed assistance in accessing services is provided. As the Bradley Counseling Center is part of Allendale Association, clinical and psychiatric services are readily available to Allendale's foster care youth and families. On going needs assessments occur during the weekly face-to-face contact that foster parents, and the children in their care, have with their Allendale foster care staff. In addition, weekly, or bi-weekly, clinical consultation provides foster parents another opportunity to discuss concerns and issues as they arise, with other members of the clinical treatment team. Such consistent dialogue provides for a pro-active, collaborative approach to identifying and addressing service needs in a timely fashion. Agency staff assist foster parents in accessing services on an on-going basis (i.e. referrals, resource locations, phone numbers etc.)

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

Key concepts:

- Foster Parents have the right to be oriented to funding available to support the needs of the child and how to access the financial support
- The Rate Schedule is made known to foster parents.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency provides a monthly Board Payment, funds for Respite, and activity/Enrichment funds for the children in the care of the Foster Parent.
- Attached is the rate schedule for the agency which outlines the funding available and how to access it.
- The child's needs are assessed formally at the time of placement and at Child and Family Team Meetings, and any time that new issues arise to identify what resources and financial support is needed. Additional funds are approved if needed to meet the needs of the child.

Allendale makes financial reimbursement checks for board payments available on the 4th working day of the month after 4:00 p.m. Allendale also provides reimbursement for respite care on a monthly basis. (See attached rate schedule). Foster parents can choose to regularly pick up their check at the Bradley Counseling Center office or have them mailed to their residence. Foster parents may also utilize direct deposit.

At the time of admission to the foster care program, the child's developmental, medical, educational, psychological, social, cultural and recreational needs are assessed as part of the Integrated Assessment and Service Plan development process. This assessment is repeated at each quarterly Child and Family Team Meeting and when new situations and issues arise for the child. Developmentally appropriate therapeutic services are researched and identified as recommended by the assessment process and included in the treatment plan toward meeting the individualized goals. Resources are sought to meet the child's goals in their foster home community placement and toward their permanency goal. All resources for foster children available through DCFS and other organizations are utilized. When meeting individual needs requires additional funding, a budget is developed by the caseworker in collaboration with the foster parent and the identified resource, and if appropriate with the child's input, and approved by the agency Director of Clinical and Community Services. Enrichment Funds are also set aside by the program and promoted to youth and their foster parents to encourage exploration of new interests, recreation opportunities, classes, camps or other activities. The total amount available is documented on the monthly board statement foster parents receive. Staffs also seek scholarships and funding to provide additional recreational, educational, vocational or other opportunities of interest to youth. Please see the attached rate schedule for a review of the financial support available to foster parents. Respite is more fully described in the narrative for responsibility #9.

Financial disputes, which are rare, are handled individually, and resolved in a timely manner utilizing the following steps:

***When a payment concern arises, the program director is available to discuss the issue with the foster parents immediately on the phone. If needed a meeting is scheduled where the issue is reviewed to determine whether it is a programmatically valid claim.**

***If the claim is determined to be programmatically valid, the foster parent is given the option of having a check issued immediately or having the funds added to the next monthly board payment.**

***If the claim is determined to not be programmatically valid, the foster parent is provided with the written policy regarding the disputed issue. Attempts are also made to help identify community resources that may provide additional funding. If the foster parent wishes to further appeal the decision, they are directed to the agency Vice-President and/or the advocacy office.**

- 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/her own family and cultural heritage.***

Key concepts:

- Foster Parents have a right to be made aware of the child's permanency goal at the time of placement, changes to this goal throughout the duration of the placement, and active involvement in service planning for the child.
- Foster Parents identify the importance of knowing who the key team members are in the child's life, their contact information, and which providers will be visiting the child in the home. Additionally, foster parents have the right to understand the role of the various service providers.
- Trainings are important to promote an understanding of how to preserve memories and milestones for the child, how to promote and enhance the child's cultural identity; and how to support the child's relationship with biological family.

Allendale Association does this by:

- At the time of assessing placement, the Matching Tool is utilized to explore the needs of the child and the inherent and culturally significant issues of the child and the family of origin to consider whether the foster parent has the resources and willingness to provide for the child's needs and engage in the permanency planning process with the biological family
- In response to foster parent request, the agency is providing an individualized form listing family and collaterals, along with their contact information, to the foster home at the time of placement and as new information is available. The form also lists which service providers will be visiting the foster home. The roles of various service providers are shared during Pre-Service Training, agency orientation and throughout the placement of the youth. (See Attachment provided to foster parents)
- The Agency provides foster parents with an annual training calendar detailing the topics to be covered over the course of the year. Training is also provided on how to support ties with biological family and cultural identity.
- During weekly home visits and at quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings foster parents are included in planning for the foster youth's visits with biological family. Both the youth's connection to biological family and also the foster family's schedule needs are respected.
- The creation and updating of Life Books is reviewed at quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings which brings awareness to how familial and cultural connections are being sustained in the child's life.
- Foster Parents are included in Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, and Court Hearings which discuss permanency planning for the youth.

As part of the foster care team, foster parents meet regularly with other team members to review treatment plan issues and make recommendations. Foster parents are an integral part of all treatment planning decisions. This includes discussion around ways

to make visits and communication with the biological family most productive while also coordinating around the schedule needs of the foster parents. Diligent efforts are made to interview the child and do a complete search of the records to identify familial supports for visitation and potential respite resources. Prior to the 6-month Administrative Case Review, letters of notification are sent to foster parents, along with a phone call from the caseworker. A comprehensive staffing is scheduled which includes the entire clinical team. At the staffing, the team review the progress made by the child over the previous six months, evaluate current service needs, and set goals for the next six months. Visiting/communication plans are also reviewed and team input sought to address any possible concerns.

As part of the foster care treatment team, foster parents are always part of discussions around service plan changes. Should a plan include transitioning a child out of their care, a written 14- day notice is provided to the foster parents as a follow-up to conversations with them regarding the plan.

Caseworkers are held accountable for coordinating the scheduling of the comprehensive staffings such that all foster care team members are available to attend. The Foster Care Program maintains a system that tracks all scheduled Administrative Case Reviews, staffings, and court dates for each foster care client. This system is reviewed and updated on a weekly basis with caseworkers. Case workers are required to share the outcomes and updates from meetings the Foster Parent is unable to attend within 24 hours of the meeting or hearing to ensure that the Foster Parent has all the necessary information in a timely fashion.

In addition to the general history of a youth, information around connections the youth has with biological parents are highlighted. Discussions regarding current visitations with biological family take place and visit plans reviewed at the time of pre-placement visits but also throughout the placement. With biological parents, a mentoring relationship is encouraged as reunification plans are implemented. Shared-parenting with biological family is encouraged, as the alliance between Foster and Biological Parents provides an opportunity for more stability for the youth during the transition. The creation and updating of Life Books is reviewed at quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings which brings awareness to how familial and cultural connections are being sustained in the child's life.

Regularly scheduled clinical consultation is offered for every child that includes participation by the biological and foster parents, other identified relatives, and treatment team members. Through these on-going conversations, a shared understanding of the child is facilitated to include a plan for how to ensure family connections are maintained (or established if a search of past documents received by a case worker lead to opportunities to re-connect a youth with a family member that the youth is seeking). Staff conduct assessments of biological family members so that Foster Parents are able to understand that there may be family members who are safe resources for the youth. Foster Parents are assisted in developing an alliance with other biological family members. A potential support for the foster family may also develop, as these screened/approved relatives may serve as a resource for the youth.

Foster parents are offered in-service training and education to help them incorporate the importance of the child's family connection and cultural heritage into the child's daily living experience, and to develop an understanding that not all biological family members are safety risks. This education is designed to insure that the biological family is treated with respect in the foster home, and that the child is able to follow the visitation and communication plans outlined in the service plan. In addition, foster parents are encouraged to establish healthy and open relationships with the biological parents of a child in their care. Through utilization of foster parents as parent mentors to birth families, they are able to serve as role models to birth parents. This promotes a more trusting, open relationship with the birth parent that is based on helping serve the best interest of the child and provides opportunities for better adjustment for the youth, and a more successful outcome in permanency planning for the youth. This is achieved through foster parents welcoming birth families into the foster home for extended visitation, inclusiveness in appointments and educational activities for the youth, full utilization of foster parents as treatment team members, and via on-going communication regarding the youth's needs.

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

Key Concepts:

- If licensing concerns or violations occur, Due Process exists – there is no cause for undue alarm.
- There are resources available for support during an investigation process. A mediator or Advocate is available to foster families.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency provides support (for example- though education) to Foster Parents through investigating all complaints in a timely manner – the same day if possible.
- Agency staff encourage foster parents to identify an advocate to be present during investigative processes.
- Agency staff are available to assist the foster family with the appeal process and provide support throughout the investigation process as well.
- To better assist Foster Parents with identification to and communication with outside service providers, an ID card verifying their role as a licensed Foster Care Provider is provided.

When there is a licensing complaint, the agency investigates this complaint in a timely fashion - the same day if possible. The Allendale Licensing Representative for the home sets up a meeting at the foster family home. If the complaint originates from a source outside of the agency, the Foster Care Program Manager notifies the foster family as soon as the complaint is received, but no later than 24 hours after its receipt. If the complaint originates from within the agency, the caseworker or Foster Care Program Manager will notify the foster parent on the same day the complaint is made, when possible. As part of the investigative process, the Licensing Representative or the Foster Care Program Manager interviews the foster child, the foster parents, and other parties as necessary. The investigative process is completed within 2 weeks of receiving or making the initial complaint. Foster parents are encouraged to have an advocate person of their choosing present during the investigation process. All investigations are completed with close monitoring by a program supervisor, in a timely manner, and may include staffings with the Allendale clinical team. If warranted, a written license compliance record indicating the licensing standard with which they are not in compliance, and the time frame for correcting the item is discussed with and given to the foster parent. In addition, a written copy of foster parent's rights is given to the family at that time including their right to appeal. Agency staff, if requested, is available to assist the family with the appeal process.

The first step in the appeal process is an informal meeting that includes foster parents, the agency Licensing Representative, the Foster Care Program Manager/agency licensing supervisor, and Director. At this time the licensing standards that have been violated and the resulting corrective action plans are fully reviewed and the decision making process explained. If issues remain unresolved and the foster parents wish to carry the appeal to the next level, agency staff will assist foster parents in composing a written request to the licensing coordinator of the Northern region. This request will ask for an informal review which will include foster parents, an advocate person of their choosing, the agency licensing representative, the agency licensing supervisor and the Northern region licensing coordinator. If issues continue to be unresolved, foster parents may choose to request a formal administrative hearing. Requests for mediation and/or administrative review of licensing are again written and sent to the Northern Regional Licensing Office, and the above noted parties are required to participate.

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.*

Key Concepts:

- Relevant information regarding the child is communicated to foster families as it becomes available (Examples: full disclosure meetings, meetings with team members as new information is made available).
- All staff of the Foster Care team are available to help the Foster Parent understand the youth's mental health needs which help the

family to more effectively understand and manage the needs of the youth.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Agency staffs provide information to Foster Parents as soon as it becomes known in order to provide full disclosure to the foster family. Prior to placement of the youth, meetings to provide full disclosure are held as often as needed to provide thorough information to the foster family. Once a child is in care, information is shared via phone calls, clinical consultations, at home visits, and also during Child and Family Team meetings.

Staff and foster parents are routinely trained in the appropriate release of information and access of appropriate consents for this release. Confidentiality issues, as they relate to foster care, are incorporated into the different topics presented during the year. Caseworkers are responsible for regularly providing foster parents with all available information that affects the child in their care. Caseworkers are held accountable for such information dissemination during: 1) weekly supervision sessions; 2) weekly internal staff meetings; 3) regular treatment team meetings which include the foster parents in clinical consultation, and 4) formal quarterly child and family team meetings.

Regularly scheduled clinical consultations (as noted in Right #1) provide the foster parent with the opportunity to engage with fellow team members around a child's emotional and behavioral functioning. Each team member shares observations and poses questions, which assist in identifying clinical issues and provides the opportunity to receive more immediate support for issues and concerns. A special effort is made to arrange clinical consultation at times when key participants can attend. New information is often available from the school or the therapist as the relationships unfold for the child in foster care. Having a regular time to consult with these parties provides the medium for foster parents to hear observations and to ask questions to put together a broader perspective of their child. Additional clinical consultation is offered by phone or in person with foster parents individually or with subgroups of the treatment team in order to clarify issues and to create plans as issues arise. Clinical consultation incorporates the valued role that foster parents play as treatment team members in intervening to reduce referral problems and to contribute to the development of the service plan recommendations. This process also ensures that every team member has access to all information and the opportunity to see/hear and include all perspectives of what needs a youth has. It provides more thorough insight into treating and stabilizing the "whole" child as all team members develop a shared understanding of the youth's mental health needs in a timelier manner.

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.*

Key Concepts:

- With exception of confidential information regarding birth parents, foster parents are provided written documentation regarding medical, educational, mental health, legal history, and relevant other known information necessary for the care of the child.
- The Foster Parent has the right to participate in full-disclosure meetings and all transitional meetings during the pre-placement visit process.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency trains staff and Foster Parents regarding pertinent policies and procedures around sharing information regarding the child to be placed.
- The agency provides Foster Parents written documentation in the form of medical history, educational history, service planning (including visitation arrangements), and case history of the child.
- The agency facilitates full disclosure meetings, as well as transitional meetings and visits prior to placement.
- Communication is an on-going process and staffs are responsible for sharing information during weekly home visits, clinical consultation, Child and Family Team Meetings, and via court and Administrative Case Reviews.

Full Disclosure is a process of sharing information with the Foster Parent; it is not simply one meeting but rather on-going communication with the team placing the youth in a foster home, the agency staff who will take on case management, and the receiving Foster Parent. The goal is ensure that the Foster Parent has access to all information available and support from the referring program as the Foster Parent begins to get to know the youth. Allendale Association believes that involvement of the foster parent as soon as possible better enables the Foster Parent to access information, and incorporates their input into the process of assessing the child's needs and the appropriateness of the match with the family.

Prior to placing a child in a foster home meetings facilitating full disclosure are held which includes the prospective foster parents, referring staff members, receiving foster care program staff, clinical staff (if applicable), licensing staff, program manager, and Director. Foster parents are invited to read and review in person the hard copy referral documents (on the child only) that are provided to the agency prior to meeting to discuss the child. In this way, foster parents are encouraged to fully appreciate the referral problems, family connections and visitation needs, and the cultural background of the child. While hard copies are not released at this point in the process, viewing the child's issues in words seems to better assist foster parents in preparing questions for consideration; to assess their resources and what training or plans are needed to support the child in their home and local community. At these meetings the prospective foster parents and the Allendale staff receive all available information necessary for the proper care of the child and have the opportunity to ask questions of the staff who

know the youth the best. As outlined in agency policy and procedure, a packet of information in a binder is provided to the prospective foster parents which includes written documentation of the following:

1. The medical history of the child including known medical problems or communicable diseases, immunization records, and insurance and medical card information;
2. The educational history of the child, including any special educational needs and details of the child's IEP (individualized educational plan, IFSP (Individual Family Service Plans) when the child is receiving special education services or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan;
3. A copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including visitation arrangements and revisions of such;
4. A copy of the child's initial and most recent Integrated Assessment which includes: a case history of the child – how the child came into care, the child's legal status, the permanency goal for the child, a history of the child's previous placements, reasons for placement changes (excluding information which identifies any previous foster or relative caregiver), criminal history, behavior problems including fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse and sexually problematic behavior, aggressive and destructive behavior, run away behavior, substance abuse habits, mental health history including self harm and suicidal information, and information around any psychotropic medication the child is prescribed.

The content of these documents have been fully discussed with foster parents prior to placement as part of the full-disclosure process. In the case of emergency placements, when all of the above referenced information may not be available, agency staff will provide known information verbally as it becomes available and subsequently provide this information in writing within 10 working days after placement. During the full disclosure process prior to accepting placement of the youth, the prospective foster parents sign a signature sheet, with check off boxes indicating that they have received all information known to the agency and had the opportunity to discuss the needs and understanding of the youth first verbally via phone calls, then through consultations and meetings during the transition/pre-placement visits. Foster parents are provided with all of the information needed to best meet the needs of the child while respecting the biological family's right to confidentiality. Caseworkers seek supervisory review and approval of all information prior to releasing information.

A portion of the weekly foster care team meeting is dedicated, as needed, to training agency staff on the policies and procedures, including those related to sharing of information with foster parents, pertinent to the Foster Parent Law. Case staffs are held accountable for sharing of information with foster parents through a number of venues including: Child and Family Team meetings, clinical staffings, weekly reviews

during team meetings, individual supervision, and quarterly file reviews - as a copy of the foster parent signature page is required to be in the file.

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, 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 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.*

Key Concepts:

- Notification of all that goes on in child's life and inclusion in decision-making process for planning regarding child's permanency plan/goals and daily treatment (affiliated with Right #1).

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency treats Foster Parents as vital members of the team and, as such, encourages full participation in case planning and decision-making process for the youth in care.
- Foster parents are notified and encouraged to participate at court hearings, Administrative Care Reviews (ACRs), Child and Family Team Meetings, and regularly scheduled clinical consultations. Staff coordinates Child and Family Team Meetings and clinical consultation times around times that work best for the Foster Parent whenever possible, and hold meetings in the foster home environment if requested by the Foster Parent and appropriate for permanency planning.

In order to promote their involvement, all Child and Family Team Meetings and clinical consultation conferences are scheduled in consultation with the foster parents. This better facilitates their participation and ensures that their voice as foster parents is heard regarding the youth in their care. Foster parents, as integral members of the child welfare team, are always notified of, and included in, the child's staffing. They are asked and expected to give their thoughts and concerns from their unique point of view. These concerns are and will continue to be given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other member of the professional child welfare team. The staff person chairing the staffing will ensure that this occurs. Caseworkers consult with foster parents around scheduling of clinical consultations (described in right #1) and child staffings in a timely manner. These staffings include, but are not limited to, educational, quarterly, and legal staffings. When at all possible, the foster care worker provides written notice to the foster parent at least two weeks advance notice when scheduling a staffing. Whenever possible, scheduling the next

staffing is done as part of the staffing agenda to ensure all parties are included in the scheduling process. They continue to notify the foster parents of the next court date and advise them regarding the likely content of the court session. Likewise, at the occurrence of a 6-month ACR (Administrative Case Review), letters of notification from DCFS, along with a phone call from the caseworker remains consistent practice.

Foster parents are not only notified of staffings, court hearings, and ACR's relating to their foster child(ren), they are also strongly encouraged to attend these meetings. If a foster parent is unable to attend any meeting or staffing relating to their foster child, it is the responsibility of the child's caseworker to inform both the child and the foster parent of the outcome of any meeting. In the case of an emergency staffing, the caseworker will immediately notify the foster parent, explain the concerns, request feedback on these issues, and encourage the foster parent to attend the emergency staffing.

As part of the professional team, foster parents are supported in maintaining regular contact with any service provider involved with their foster child(ren). These service providers include, but are not limited to, physicians, teachers, therapists, and mentors. The caseworker also maintains regular contact with these collateral service providers, and shares updated information with the foster parent regarding issues as they arise (discussed in Right #1).

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

Key Concepts:

- Encourage candid relationship between biological family and foster family in order to facilitate better care of the child and achievement of the permanency plan (often key to the success of the placement)
- Protection of the biological family's confidentiality and personal information
- What is able to be disclosed will be shared with foster family

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency encourages Foster Parents to develop a candid relationship with the biological family in order to facilitate better care of the child and achievement of the permanency plan. This is often the key to the success of the placement.
- The agency support Foster Parents who volunteer to serve as mentors to biological family of the child in their care.
- Communication is an on-going process and staffs are responsible for sharing information during intake, weekly home visits, clinical

consultation, Child and Family Team Meetings, and via court and Administrative Case Reviews.

All information that the foster parent needs to know to care for a child in their home is released to them. Upon intake all necessary information that is relevant to the care of the child is provided. This includes but is not limited to information regarding a child's: background, development, physical/mental health, behavior, and education. The disclosure process begins before a child is placed in a foster home. After the agency approaches a foster family about taking a child into their home, an initial full disclosure meeting is held. At this meeting, the foster family discusses the child with the child's current treatment team. The Matching Tool is utilized as a concrete way to explore with the foster parent the child's needs and to identify skills and resources available, or to identify where additional training or supports are required. When a match is agreed upon, Foster Parents participate in all discharge planning meetings and clinical consultations after each pre-placement visit (discussed in Right #8). When new information arises, consideration is given for the kind of information that is to be shared, the best way to share this information, and who needs to be present in the conversation so that questions can be asked or decisions made. Every effort is made to support the foster parent in understanding the issues and to invite their contribution to identifying next steps.

Documents can be released to foster parents with the consent of DCFS or the legal guardian. Allendale releases information if and when DCFS/guardianship consent is given. Releasing information to those foster parents converting to adoptive parents is spelled out in the Adoption Act, with which the agency fully complies. A copy of the Adoption Act is given to those foster parents considering adoption. Furthermore, Allendale staff has been trained in the Inter Ethnic Placement Act (IEPA), which is intended to assist in serving best interests of the child in relation to placements and adoptions. As mentioned earlier, when and if more information about the child becomes available after a child is placed in a foster home, the caseworker will disclose this information to the foster family as soon as possible.

One of the most valuable but often overlooked, sources of information around a child in placement are the biological parents of that child. They are often the keepers of information regarding the child, unknown to anyone else (i.e. favorite foods, activities enjoyed, etc.). Laying the groundwork for on-going communication with a child's biological family is therefore an important process. Foster parents are encouraged to attend specific Allendale trainings which focus on developing positive, collaborative relationships with their foster child's family of origin. Agency foster parents with experience in mentoring biological families have taken on a training role with new foster parents. They are able to provide information regarding how best to engage biological families.

Biological parents who have developed a good working relationship with their child's foster parents are often willing to trust them with their child's information. Through utilization of foster parents as parent mentors to birth families, they are able to serve as role models to birth parents. This role as a mentor increases the communication

with the birth parents and engages the birth family in services for their child. It also serves to foster a healthier, more consistent connection that youth has with his/her biological family. In cases where reunification is the permanency goal for the youth, foster parents are utilized in supervising visits and also in guiding birth parents in developing relationships with the youth's educators and medical providers.

11. *The right to be given 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 reason for the change or the termination. The notice shall be waived in cases only with a court order or when the child is believed to be at imminent risk of harm.*

Key Concepts:

- Placement plans are always discussed with all team members; foster parents are part of this team. A written plan is developed with input from team discussions. These plans are discussed in advance, unless there is imminent risk of harm for the child in placement.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency involves Foster Parents in all aspects of case planning and input from Foster Parents is sought regarding placement matters.
- The agency facilitates transition planning in order to help both the child and foster family with transitioning the placement.
- The agency supports the Foster Parent's right to appeal any involuntary change of placement. The written policy for appealing placement decisions is found in the Foster Parent Handbook and is also discussed during pre-service training and the agency's orientation.

Plans for a change in the placement of a child is discussed in staffings and at the ACR where input from foster parents is sought and concerns addressed. When a decision to move a child has been reached, a written Notice of Decision (DCFS 151) is filled out by staff and given to the foster parents as a formal notification 14 calendar days prior to the child being moved, except when there is imminent risk of harm. Foster parents and all parties involved are asked to help develop a transition plan and follow through with the plan, within the allotted time.

Foster parents have the right to appeal change in placement decisions and the staff will remind and encourage them to do this if they are not in agreement. The appeal process (including the emergency review process) is explained in the pre-service training, at the policies and procedures in-services with Allendale Association, and in the handbook given to foster parents when licensed. Additionally, a written copy of the appeal process is provided by foster care staff to foster parents when notified of a decision to remove a child from care. Foster Care Staff assist foster families with this process.

When a foster family voluntarily decides to have a child removed, a written 14-day notice is given to the agency by the foster parent. The agency works with the foster

parent to develop an appropriate plan for transitioning a youth out of the home, unless the child or other members of the family are at imminent risk of harm.

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 the 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.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster parents, as part of the team, are made aware of all hearings in a timely manner.
- "Timely manner" is determined by the situation and case needs.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency notifies Foster Parents regarding upcoming court hearings, ACRs, and other meetings regarding the youth with as much notice as possible.
- Agency staff encourage the Foster Parents to participate in all meetings and hearings for the youth in their care. On-going communication regarding upcoming hearings takes place during weekly home visits, regularly scheduled clinical consultation, as well as at Child and Family Team meetings.

Regularly scheduled clinical consultation conferences provide an opportunity to remind foster parents about the upcoming court hearing and to review with foster parents in advance the pending recommendations, reports, and plans being presented to the court utilizing the foster parents' input. An effort is made to organize times when the Guardian ad litem (GAL) for the child is available, particularly prior to a court date, so that their legal perspective can be available for foster parents to understand issues, the options, and the legal proceedings in the permanency process. The structure of clinical consultations is modified as needed so that there is time for subgroups of the treatment team to discuss issues separately if needed. Foster parents have a unique role and perspectives in the permanency planning process and every effort is made to provide time for foster parents and the case management team, including the Program Manager and Director, to discuss the issues pertinent to the foster parent. Ongoing court dates are generally scheduled at a court appearance. If the foster parent has a conflict preventing attendance they are notified of the new court date within 24 hours. Foster parents are encouraged to attend the court hearings to familiarize themselves with the court system and to present their concerns to the court. Foster parents have access to related court training that is routinely offered through Allendale and the court system.

Foster parent feedback around timely notification of court proceedings and their involvement in the court process is solicited during quarterly comprehensive Child and Family Team Meetings staffing's. This feedback is then utilized and reviewed as part of

the caseworkers weekly supervision as well as the quality improvement process assuring caseworker accountability.

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 reentered into foster care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the foster home.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster parents who have previously cared for any youth have the right for first consideration of this placement when placement is being sought again for this youth.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency shares information regarding a previous placement who is in need of a current home. Staff and the Foster Parent mutually assess the viability of having the child return to the home.

When a foster child leaves foster care only to return into the foster care system, the case worker reviews the DCFS SACWIS system to learn placement history and identify possible options for the youth. A former foster home is considered a placement option, even when the agency may not serve as the caseworker of record for the youth, especially if this was a place of stability for the child. The caseworker reviews both the child and foster home case files noting any changes that have occurred that may impact replacement. A staffing with the potential foster parent is held to discuss the current needs and best interest of the child. Returning to the previous foster home may provide the child with a sense of continuity of relationships and care.

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 party when exercising the right to appeal.*

Key Concepts:

- Allendale's grievance process is readily available to all foster parents.
- There is no harassment or retaliation against foster parents who choose to appeal.
- If the agency grievance process does not resolve the matter, foster parents have the right to file a complaint with the Advocacy Office.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency appeals process is detailed in the Foster Parent Handbook and is reviewed and distributed annually to all foster parents. The appeal process is also included as an Appendix in the Implementation Plan which is again distributed to all foster parents annually.

- The agency provides foster parents with the Advocacy Office contact number: 1-800-232-3798.

The grievance process is detailed in writing in the Foster Parent Handbook that every foster family has in their possession and is reviewed during the initial licensing process. When changes are made in the process, updates are sent out to every foster family home. The grievance process currently reads as follows:

"If foster parents are having problems working with their caseworker and attempts to resolve these problems have not worked, they should complete a Foster Parent Grievance Form and submit it to the Foster Care Manager. The foster parent will be contacted within 48 hours to schedule an initial meeting with the worker and manager. If this meeting fails to gain results, another meeting can be scheduled to include the director or other administrators until the problem is resolved. If the foster parents do not agree with a decision made by agency personnel (almost always a team decision), they may request an internal appeal and meet with the Manager, Director, or Vice President as necessary. If this meeting fails to resolve the issue, the family can make a written appeal to the DCFS advocacy office. Allendale staff will aid foster parents in this process. The decision making process, or, if necessary, referral to DCFS, will be completed no longer than 30 days from the date the written grievance was submitted to Allendale's Program Manager."

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

It is the aim of the team approach to provide effective, consistent communication with each other to lessen the chance for misunderstandings and conflicts among all caregivers and treatment providers. Program staffs strive to respond to non-crisis foster parent calls within 48 hours. Clinical consultation also provides a forum for clarifying different points of view, understanding what each person brings to their role as a member of the child's treatment team, and in sharing information with everyone equitably. Additionally, the agency provides 24-hour support for immediate response to Foster Parent concerns. Should a conflict arise, the Allendale grievance process is the first step in resolving conflicts. The second step is the more formal DCFS Appeal Process which is found in the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook given to each foster home during pre-service training. Foster parents have been encouraged to "elect" a foster parent board of a few members, who would represent foster parents and serve as a liaison to the agency. Decisions are made as a team. If a conflict cannot be resolved at the base level, the matter is reviewed by higher levels of the Allendale Administration.

There is no harassment or retaliation for foster parents who appeal. Allendale works toward a quick resolve of all issues. The appeal process is discussed during the annual mandatory in-service on policies and procedures, and, along with the grievance form, mailed annually to all foster parents along with the current year's implementation plan. This generally occurs in the month of March.

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 the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by department employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of these reports, and investigation by the inspector general, appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act.*

Key Concepts:

- If the agency's formal grievance process does not resolve the concerns, foster parents have the right to report misconduct by service providers.

Allendale Association does this by:

- A copy of the Office of the Inspector General brochure is distributed annually.
- The agency provides foster parents with the contact number for the Foster Parent Hotline: 1-800-722-9124.

Foster parents are informed at the pre-service training about the Foster Parent Hotline which has been established to report misconduct by department employees, service providers and contractors. Confidential reports and investigations are handled by the Inspector General. Foster parents are provided copies of the Inspector General's Brochure which outlines information regarding whom to contact to report service provider misconduct. This information is also available through DCFS, all private agencies, and is mailed to foster parents annually along with the current year's implementation plan.

B. FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE but are not limited to:

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

Key Concepts:

- Information that the Foster Parents discover is shared with the service providers and treatment team in a timely fashion through forums provided by the agency.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Safety and well being issues are communicated to agency immediately
- Agency staff facilitate other information sharing during: weekly home visits, clinical consultations, child and family team meetings

Through the PRIDE training and Allendale orientation, foster parents learn to take responsibility for evaluating what to communicate to the foster care team and when to communicate it. There are certain issues (example: situations requiring mandatory reporting or regarding the safety and well-being of the youth) that need to be communicated immediately, and other issues that can wait for the worker to address at the regular weekly visit to the foster home in which weekly behavior logs are reviewed and discussed, during regularly scheduled clinical consultation with all service providers, or at child and family team meetings. The importance of sharing all observations and not minimizing or dismissing any behaviors is addressed in great detail during pre-service training, agency orientation and during the full disclosure/pre-placement process because open communication is one of the keys to placement stabilization. Foster parents are encouraged to ask their caseworker for further clarification and guidance on this in regards to the specific children and situations with which they currently deal. Additional clinical meetings or consultations are scheduled when information seems to pose a risk of the placement and are scheduled at a time convenient for the foster parent.

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

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents uphold the confidentiality of the biological family as outlined in the Foster Parent Handbook.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Initially pre-service training addresses confidentiality of information related to foster children and their families.
- Subsequently, annual training is provided around Policy and Procedures, including issues of confidentiality and agency staff models this boundary in all communications.

The Specialized Foster Parent Handbook that each foster family receives contains not only the Foster Parent Law, but also Part 402, Licensing Standards; Part 402.24 deals specifically with confidentiality so that foster parents become aware of the legal ramifications of releasing confidential information about children and families. Issues regarding confidentiality are addressed during the initial licensing process.

Confidentiality is also addressed during PRIDE pre-service training. In addition foster parents attend Allendale training on the law regarding confidentiality issues and the release of confidential information. This training is part of the annual Policy and Procedure Training at Allendale. The caseworker also addresses the issue in the home with the foster parent anytime issues around confidentiality arise.

Foster parents need to feel confident that they are able to advocate for the child without violating confidentiality laws regarding the child and the child's biological family. When issues regarding maintaining confidentiality arise, foster parents are encouraged to bring their questions forward to agency staff so that the issue can be considered more fully. Every effort is made to support the foster parent in supporting their foster child in sustaining family and community connections within the boundaries of confidentiality laws. Participation by Foster Parents in Administrative Case Reviews, court hearings and other meetings provides access to information that is frequent and on-going, and aids a Foster Parent in learning more about the youth in their care and matters related to what family issues may impact the child. Foster parents are responsible for communicating their concerns about their ability to handle a specific behavior to ensure appropriate training and coaching is available to them.

3. *The Responsibility to Advocate for Children in Their Care.*

Key Concepts:

- Advocacy requires that foster parents understand the child's strength, limitations, and interests. Foster Parents are responsible for speaking up for the best outcome for the child and supporting the child in speaking up for her or himself.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Agency staff connect foster parents with others who advocate for the foster children: CASA, GALs, school staff, DCFS case reviewers
- Case staff enlist foster parent participation in ACRs, IA assessments, court hearings, Child and Family team meetings, clinical consultations
- Educational Advocacy Training offered during pre-service training

Caseworkers encourage foster parents to work closely with other persons also responsible for advocating for the children in their care. In addition to caseworkers these include CASA, the Guardian Ad Litem, school staff, and DCFS case review staff. Great effort is made to schedule clinical consultation conferences regularly with all members of the child's treatment team and at convenient times so that there are established relationships among team members. It is the intent that regular communication regarding the needs and issues that may require advocacy will be supported by considerate dialogue by all members in consideration of the individual clinical and permanency issues of the child. Clarification of roles in clinical consultation when issues arise often contributes to clearer advocacy efforts on behalf of the child and better outcomes for children in care.

Caseworkers not only inform foster parents of staffings, ACR's, CAYITs, Integrated Assessment activities, case conferences, and court hearings, but they also actively enlist their participation in these meetings. The caseworkers note how participation in such meetings and assessment activities are opportunities for foster parents to articulate thoughts and concerns, and to advocate for the best interest of the child in their care.

Foster parents are supported in attending Educational Advocacy Training during pre-service PRIDE training. In addition, any licensed foster parent who has not completed Educational Advocacy, and who wishes to have his/her foster home license renewed must complete the training before he/she is eligible for renewal. Service appeal brochures are routinely provided at all ACR's and case staff assist foster parents in understanding and, when necessary, completing the process. Foster parents also have access to related court training that is routinely offered through Allendale and via DCFS.

Advocating for the child doesn't just occur at major meetings and court hearings; Foster Parents advocate for the child during weekly home visits with the caseworker. This weekly meeting is an opportunity to identify both positive behaviors and concerns that are arising (through review of Behavior Logs), advocating for the interests of and needs for the youth.

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

Key Concepts:

- Line 1 of paragraph 1 is the key: "All participants in the child welfare system must treat each other with mutual respect, dignity and consideration." Foster Parents are responsible for leading by example especially in referring to the child's family with dignity.
- Foster Parents are challenged with balancing the unconditional love and loyalty the child has to bio parents with their professional role as foster parents.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Pre-service training and Allendale orientation initially addresses issues of treating all with mutual respect. On-going training continues to provide opportunities to learn about birth family dynamics.
- Case staffs meet individually with foster children, foster parents, and biological families enabling them to share information and express feelings.
- Quarterly surveys are distributed to elicit feedback and detailing areas of concern.

- The agency assists, by supporting foster parents, through clinical consultations, in looking at their own attitudes/feelings about bio family such that reunification can best be promoted.

All participants in the child welfare system must treat each other with mutual respect, dignity and consideration. Each participant is encouraged to take on this responsibility. These issues are directly addressed in pre-service PRIDE Training and during the agency licensing process and foster parent orientation. Continuing opportunities to learn about birth family dynamics are available during on-going scheduled trainings. At least three of the annual trainings focus on these topics. Caseworkers continue to address these issues, offer support, and provide new information about the birth parents when it becomes known and not in violation of the birth family's confidentiality. Clinical consultations are facilitated with all members of the foster care team where foster parents are supported in looking at their own attitudes about the bio family and how to support the connections with biological parents during the reunification process and also if the permanency plan changes to guardianship or adoption. Clinical consultations also provide an opportunity for biological parents and foster parents to communicate directly to each other. This has assisted in greater understanding of enduring preferences of the child from the biological family to the foster family and to contribute together to a shared understanding of the child's needs and how adults can be most effective in supporting the child. Concrete information is shared with everyone, including dates for upcoming appointments and school functions. Foster parents have the opportunity to cultivate a coaching relationship with the biological parents during these consultations if that is appropriate.

Caseworkers and other case staff involved in the lives of the child and the child's family are charged with the responsibility to be sure that all parties are treated equitably and with respect. Case staff schedule to meet individually with foster children, foster parents, and biological family enabling each of them to share information and express their feelings openly. In addition, staff meet quarterly with foster parents to answer questions, and elicit feedback from the family. Also, both foster parents and biological families are encouraged to complete quarterly agency surveys detailing potential areas of concern. Results of these surveys are utilized both in providing individual foster homes and biological families with extra needed supports, but also to inform program development on the whole. When concerns arise where feedback is needed, case staff, in addition to addressing these concerns in supervision and agency clinical reviews, will schedule a Child and Family Treatment Team meeting bringing all participants involved to the table for resolution of the identified concern.

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

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents are to assess what it is they have to offer a child in their care, and what limitations they have to providing care for this youth. Foster parents must be willing to assess if the child is a good "fit" for their home/family.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency supports foster families through mutual assessments of foster parent strengths and needs utilizing the DCFS Matching tool and referral meetings/discussions, continuous discussion of training needs via the agency's "Foster Parent Training Plan" form and providing trainings to better understand the youth in care. Clinical support utilizing the agency's REStArT treatment model is provided on an on-going basis.
- The agency places a youth in care based on the foster family's assessment of their own strengths.

Families are encouraged to begin recognizing their own strengths and limitations in working with children during the initial licensing process. Pre-service PRIDE training utilizes specific worksheets in helping families understand their strengths and limitations.

The DCFS Central Matching and CIPP process, along with the Matching Tool is used to facilitate possible appropriate placements. The next step in the process of determining placement for a foster child is a phone call with foster homes to discuss an overview of the youth's history and needs of the potential placement. If the foster parent would like to be considered as a potential placement resource, a team meeting is scheduled. Foster parents are invited to play an integral role in assessing the potential match. Prior to meeting, foster parents are invited to read the child's referral information (excluding the biological family information) to fully appreciate the child's referral problem, family connections and visitation needs and cultural background. The Director or Foster Care Program Manager then engage the foster parent in a discussion, drawing upon their expertise to assess their capacities to meet the child's needs with the resources available currently in the foster home and local community. Questions are elicited and clarified to prepare for the discussion with the referral source. At this point, the team includes referring case staff, foster care staff, clinical staff, and potential foster parents. At this meeting foster parents are encouraged to put all their questions forward and case staff facilitate the assessment of the strengths and limitations of the foster family in relationship to the strengths and needs of the child. Foster parents are encouraged to evaluate the resources they may need to best address the child's needs, and to understand and adhere to their own limitations when deciding to accept placement of a youth. Additional training is discussed at this time, which may be needed to meet the child's unique medical or other needs. Also at this time the need for additional supervision or other arrangements to support the child and family's safety is discussed and then documentation of this plan follows as appropriate. The child is placed only when both foster parents and case staff come to a mutual decision that the family's strengths and resources will meet the needs of the child.

Mutual assessment of strengths and needs continues throughout placement and occurs via weekly caseworker visits, on-going clinical consultation, quarterly child and family team meetings, and case reviews. This process also provides foster parents opportunities to voice their concerns and identify additional supportive resources. If a foster home has concerns regarding additional placements, a staffing is scheduled with the entire foster care team to review the concerns and determine ways in which the team can put in place resources that will help address areas of concern. Foster parents are invited to join agency staff at bi-weekly clinical staffings where the agency's clinical treatment model, Relational Re-Enactment Systems Approach to Treatment (REStArT), is utilized to gain a better understanding of how the youth views him/her self, others and relationships. These REStArT principles are used to aid all members of the foster care team (case staff, foster parents, therapists, psychiatrists, teachers, and program management) in assessing their strengths and challenges in working with the youth in their care. Foster parents are encouraged to understand their own personal triggers and responses to various situations, as well as to share insight on what triggers a youth has. From this dialogue, a shared understanding of the youth is developed to identify what we can do to interrupt the cycle of conflict. Using this systemic understanding, a plan is developed with input from all participants, inviting an alliance between team members on a shared goal and agreement on the tasks toward the goal. The plan is monitored in subsequent quarterly staffings and more frequent clinical consultations to evaluate the effectiveness of the team's work with the child to reach his or her permanency goal.

Foster parent input regarding training suggestions is also solicited through annual phone calls to discuss training ideas, conversations during case management and licensing home visits, and via the quarterly foster parent satisfaction survey which includes questions around training needs. Training is then developed based on stated and observed needs. Foster parents are assisted in assessing their own training needs and include these needs as part of their training plan which is formally developed and discussed during annual and semi-annual licensing home visits. Additionally, foster parents participate in a formal meeting to "debrief" between placements; this meeting serves as an opportunity to assess what worked well for the prior placement and areas that the foster parent and team can better work together with the next placement.

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.*

Key Concepts:

- It is important to develop relationships with other foster parents - both social and professional networking

Allendale Association does this by:

- Supporting participation in foster parent conferences
- Providing dinner and child care before and during training sessions

- Time scheduled specifically before training sessions to facilitate foster parents to talk to other foster parents to share ideas, obtain support, and identify and develop foster parent connections
- Providing social opportunities such as picnics, holiday parties
- Supporting attendance at Statewide Foster Care Advisory council meetings
- Encouraging use of respite by foster parents

Allendale's staff encourages foster parents to affiliate with each other through events sponsored by the Allendale Foster Care Program. This has included picnics, holiday parties, etc. Foster parent training sessions and foster parent/staff meetings are other opportunities for foster parents to get to know each other and share common concerns. It is also an opportunity for foster parents to share their practical knowledge of resources in the community; foster parents realize that connections with each other are vital to increasing their knowledge and skills. Recognizing the time constraints that foster parents often experience, Allendale has made its facility available to foster parents before and after scheduled training sessions. This allows support meetings to take place in conjunction with training days thus eliminating the need for a separate meeting date. Foster parents are encouraged to talk to each other about respite support available from each other or other respected persons in the community. The foster parents are encouraged to "elect" a board to represent the group, and present issues and concerns to the agency staff.

Foster parents' affiliation with the statewide foster care network and attendance at Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council meetings are other means of support that foster parents are encouraged to utilize. These statewide groups also provide support, training, and networking opportunities. Allendale Association supports participation in these greater statewide programs and provides contact information to access these groups.

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

Key Concepts:

- Foster parents and agency staff mutually assess training needs and develop a training plan based upon the needs of the foster child in the home.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Agency staff discuss training opportunities in the home visits.
- Foster parents are surveyed for input when the annual training calendar is being developed.
- At semi-annual home visits, licensing staff provide information around training hours completed and assist in developing a plan for completing needed training hours on the "Foster Parent Training Plan" form.

By informing foster parents of community and agency training opportunities, case staff aid foster parents in seeking the training needed to serve the specific needs of children in their home. Via mutual assessment opportunities such as weekly caseworker visits, on-going clinical consultation, quarterly child and family team meetings, and case reviews, foster parents and staff identify training needs. Foster parents are supported in completing specific training in relation to the type of care their foster child requires. Training continues to be offered at Allendale throughout the year. The annual training calendar is developed with input from foster parents who are surveyed in writing quarterly, and called twice yearly to individually discuss current training needs respective to the child in their care. In addition, information on PRIDE Core Module Training is made available regularly. Foster parents are also encouraged to attend the DCFS sponsored training for care-givers as well as other community workshops. Additional respite care needed to attend training and conferences is provided by the agency when these funds are available.

Recognizing the importance of continuing education, foster care licensing staff facilitate on-going dialogue regarding current needs, and training opportunities that best meet those needs. The foster parent develops their own individual training plan and staff support this plan via documentation on the "Foster Parent Training Plan" form which is discussed monthly during home visits with case workers, and formally reviewed semi-annually by licensing staff. Foster Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning experience which includes continually assessing their strengths and areas to gain more skill, seeking training opportunities in addition to those provided by Allendale, and engaging in the Virtual Learning Center via DCFS. Agency staff assist Foster Parents with development of their Training Plan during licensing monitoring visits.

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 if preventive strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.*

Key Concepts:

- Once a child is accepted in your home – how do you keep them stable?
- Foster Parents identify their own personal resources for support (relatives, friends, churches).

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency facilitates discussions using home visits, reviews of behavior logs to identify patterns of concerning behaviors, and team participation in clinical consultations to continuously identify strategies to support the youth.
- On-going clinical support is provided utilizing the agency's REStArT treatment model.
- Additional support resources offered by the agency may include mentoring, individual and family therapy, and additional respite.

- The agency helps the family identify training needs and provide opportunities to meet those needs.
- The agency offers guidance to families for community-based support for placement stabilization, as well as post-permanency support and stabilization.

Foster parents are encouraged to keep the caseworker informed of the child's behaviors that are of concern and may be indicators of potential disruption. Behavioral logs are distributed to aid foster parents in data collection. Weekly caseworker visits, with reviews of the logs, enable case staff to help foster parents identify potential problem areas. The caseworker maintains consistent contact with collateral service providers such as teachers, therapists, doctors, and mentors to assess the functioning of a child. In addition, when a child begins displaying problematic behavior, the foster care treatment team meets to address the concerns. Together, the foster care team, including the foster parents, can better assess what resources/services would be most beneficial to support the foster family and meet the needs of the child. These resources include, but are not limited to: weekly clinical consultation, mentoring, individual therapy, family therapy, use of community resources based on the youth's interests, and additional respite.

The treatment model of the Allendale Association is utilized by the foster care team to work with a youth in care. This model, known as REStArT, is a valuable resource in helping the team to better identify ways to support a child with his or her treatment needs. This model is based on developing an understanding of how trauma is re-enacted in current relationships. The model emphasizes development of sufficient self awareness around one's own responses to the conflicts initiated by a foster child in crisis, such that service providers (i.e. caseworkers, foster parents, therapists etc.) are able to avoid/curtail power struggling and break the escalating "conflict cycle" which the child in crisis is re-enacting. The REStArT model offers the treatment team several principles for new ways of understanding the youth and interrupting negative cycles of relating in order to instill greater stability in the child's life. Training around this model is offered on an on-going basis. Regularly scheduled clinical consultation conferences is the foundational service offered to all treatment teams to work together toward meeting the goals for the child and permanency. Often on these calls, foster parents provide first hand indication of issues that have the potential to escalate into a disruption. Care is taken to listen during consultation to the foster parent and to track what the stressor is for a child, the level of problematic behavior or issue in response to the stress and how the foster parent and others have attempted to address the issue. Support is provided to foster parents to consider the effectiveness of their response and to identify alternative interventions or supports from the team in order to reduce the child's escalation into referral problem behaviors or other issues.

If preventative strategies fail, family support sessions, immediate clinical meetings, SASS intervention and psychiatric consultation are also available to assist and support the foster parent. In addition, psychosocial assessments, psychological testing, and psychiatric medication management can be accessed if needed. A 24 hour, 7 days

per week, on-call worker is available to help foster parents obtain services after regular business hours. Training around the purpose and availability of stabilization services through System of Care is conducted at the agency orientation training, during annual Policy and Procedure Training, and during weekly caseworker visits, as appropriate.

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.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents are to assess their own needs and ways for stress-reduction.
- Foster Parents identify respite in conjunction with agency staff; foster parent's consider their own personal resources for support (relatives, friends) and also agency staff consider other foster homes, child's resources (mentor, volunteers) to develop a respite plan

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency provides a monthly respite allotment and encourages foster parents to utilize it. Training on the special needs of the youth is done via the agency and Foster Parent with the respite provider.
- The agency links new foster parents to experienced foster homes in order to facilitate a mentoring relationship for the new home.
- In order to help minimize the stress, foster family support sessions (family therapy) are offered.
- Respite plans are reviewed regularly in Child and Family Team Meetings and new resources identified as needed.
- Foster homes have the option of placing their home on a voluntary hold.

Foster PRIDE pre-service training and on-going Allendale in-service training serves to help prepare foster parents for the stress that comes with specialized foster care. Recognizing that experienced foster parents have an invaluable reservoir of ways to identify, and strategies to cope with, the stress of fostering; the foster care program has recruited a number of foster families who have volunteered to mentor new foster parents as they prepare to take a foster child into their home. Such parents are able to personally share their experiences, and resources, around managing the impact of bringing a foster child into the family system.

Before a child is placed in the home, foster parents are invited to meet with the child's current team to discuss the issues the child may bring to the home and the potential impact on and response of family members. After a child's placement, the caseworker emphasizes the importance of each foster parent's ability to assess their needs and seek help when needed. Through a more consistent and ongoing dialogue with foster parents, through weekly home visits as well as weekly or bi-weekly clinical consultation, foster parents have more immediate access to case staff for guidance and support. This ensures that foster parent concerns are heard, and more timely

intervention plans and support services may be implemented. Taking a more proactive approach positively impacts the youth's stabilization and subsequently reduces the stress on the foster family. Quarterly child and family team meetings provide further opportunities to identify potential problem areas and recommend possible resources. At any time, however, the foster parent may request additional times to meet with the youth and team to identify plans that will aid in stabilizing the youth.

Case staff work with foster parents during weekly visits to expand upon their self-awareness and assist in minimizing stress. Staff work with foster parents weekly to support the needs of the family and identify resources to meet those needs. If desired by a home, staff clearly explain to foster parents about the availability of, and parameters around, placing their home on a "Voluntary Hold". This allows the foster family the opportunity to take a break from fostering until such time as they feel ready to accept another placement. It is emphasized that there are no negative connotations around placing one's home on a Voluntary Hold, and it is viewed as a supportive measure.

Recognizing that fostering can be stressful at times, agency staffs assist foster parents in identifying respite resources and developing a respite plan within the first 30 days of a child's placement in a foster home. At the initial placement staffing, foster parents in conjunction with Allendale staff explore personal friends and relatives, and also agency foster parents, and other client resources (mentor, volunteer, etc.) to develop a respite plan. Respite plans are thereafter reviewed quarterly at the Child and Family Team Meeting. Allendale's foster care program provides a monthly respite allotment which foster parents are encouraged to use. This respite allotment is available to begin once the child is placed in their home and is provided to the foster parents on a monthly basis included in their board payment. They are able to have this included in their monthly board payment by filling out a monthly respite log and turning it into either their caseworker by the end of each month. Twenty hours of respite are reimbursed on a monthly basis, with additional respite needs reviewed as needed. Foster parents may be creative in utilizing respite during the day or a few afternoons per month; these "play dates" for foster youth help foster parents minimize "burn out" during more stressful periods of time. Additional respite is offered for designated periods of time to support placement stability and reduce the stress on foster parents in supporting a child, particularly specialized foster children that can go through cycles where referral problems reoccur (i.e. aggression, emotional dysregulation, medical illness, etc.). Agency staffs encourage foster parents to share the routine and structure with their respite provider, so that trusting the respite caregiver to maintain similar expectation of the youth will reduce behavioral implications during the transitions. To support the foster parent, respite providers also receive training with staff in order to better understand the needs the youth has and how to best support the behavior plans and structure the foster parents have in the home. This is achieved through the respite provider's participation in clinical consultations or child and family team meetings learning the de-escalation techniques and crisis intervention plans for the youth.

Allendale's Bradley Counseling Center outpatient clinic provides foster family support sessions (family therapy), individual counseling, and an array of testing and psychiatric

services as needed. Caseworkers assist families who live further from Allendale to access services in their community.

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.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents play an important role in the recruitment process for new foster families.
- Foster Parents serve as ambassadors to foster care, sharing positive experiences and their own personal satisfaction with fostering.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency invites foster parents to participate in recruitment events, and utilizes foster parents as mentors to new foster homes.
- Foster Parents are provided a monetary stipend when a home they recruit is licensed and accepts a placement.
- The agency formally recognizes the efforts of foster parents at annual recognition events and Holiday gatherings.

Foster parents are invited to assist the agency in attempts to educate the public on the positive aspects of foster care. There are numerous public events that acknowledge and support foster parents and case staff informs themselves of these events and encourage foster parents to participate in them. Allendale's program also has an annual recognition event where foster parents are acknowledged for their contributions to fostering. New families are invited to these events, and participation by current families is encouraged so that their service and commitment is able to be publicly recognized. Allendale's licensing staff meets with foster parents to discuss the public relations aspect of foster parenting and ways in which foster parents can support recruitment efforts. Several of our foster families have been involved with writing newspaper articles, radio news, and church speaking engagements to spread more positives about the foster care system. Foster parent referral is one of Allendale's primary recruitment resources and is highly valued. Financial incentive is offered to foster parents for referral of a new foster parent that takes placement of a specialized foster child. In acknowledgement of their recruitment efforts, foster parents are provided with a monetary stipend when their referred home is licensed and accepts placement.

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

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents are to remain open to assessing their own needs for continuing education and actively engage in training opportunities.
- Foster Parents are to understand the limits of what the agency and they as foster parents can and can not do.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency provides professional development opportunities which are open to staff and foster parents.
- The agency includes the foster parents in clinical meetings, Child and Family Team meetings, Administrative Court Reviews and also court hearings.
- Foster families are invited to participate in annually reviewing and developing the Agency's Implementation Plan.
- The Foster Parent Liaison serves in a leadership role with other foster parents and program staff.

Allendale's foster care program partners with their foster parents in encouraging all members of the foster care team to be aware of the roles, rights and responsibilities of the child welfare team. PRIDE training initiates this approach and agency training for foster parents and the rest of the child welfare team continues it. While Allendale's program currently mandates foster parents participate in training on roles, rights, and responsibilities, bi-annually, appropriate clinical in-service trainings have also been opened to both Allendale staff and foster parents. In addition as part of the foster care treatment team, foster parents are strongly urged to actively participate in all staffings, case reviews and meetings. These are scheduled and held to accommodate foster parent time frames. Foster parent training, participation in clinical consultation, involvement in court appearances, ACR's and other educational topics assist to expand foster parent's knowledge base of the child welfare system.

Foster parents via their foster parent liaison have a recognized voice in program management. The foster parent liaison has an active role in the foster parent committee, which provides agency administration with feedback around foster home recruitment, retention, and foster parent needs. In addition to having on-going access to both the program manager and director to provide input on foster parent issues, the foster parent liaison is invited to participate, along with agency management, in scheduled program planning meetings, and thus is integral to providing foster parents input around program development.

12. *Responsibility to know and as necessary, fulfill the foster parents responsibility to serve as a mandated reported of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Welfare 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. i.e: a Mandated Reporter & Know the Investigation Process.*

Key Concepts:

- The Mandated Reporter responsibility is about reporting in order to protect others, even when it is difficult to do so (ex: others in the home, biological family of a youth).
- Foster Parents need to know what to look for (signs of abuse/neglect).

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency communicates with and trains foster parents on their role as mandated reporters.
- The agency provides a form to foster parents for signature which acknowledges their role as a mandated reporter.
- If there is an investigation, the agency supports the foster parents through the process, and provides information around the procedure for the investigation and opportunities for advocacy.

The status of "Mandated Reporter", including what it means and how to carry out this duty is discussed during the licensing process. Foster parents sign a form acknowledging their status as a mandated reporter and discuss at various times in the licensing process their role in this process. These discussions occur during licensing home visits and when foster parents review the agency's foster care policies and procedures. This ensures a team approach to addressing issues related to the Mandated Reporter Policy and its implementation. In addition to pre-service training, the monthly foster parent training/support meeting is used to address questions about their status as Mandated Reporters. Discussions center on how to remain focused on the role of reporter versus that of a "judge" who determines the outcome of an allegation; this perspective balances the team's emotional response to the youth and whomever the allegation is against. This includes their reporting responsibility regarding abusive behavior by children and youth in care, and the ensuing investigating process.

Foster parents are encouraged to share their experiences with one another to assist in understanding the implications that these laws, policies and procedures have for foster parents. The training schedule includes sessions specifically intended to address agency and DCFS policy and procedures. This includes the rules and regulations governing the investigation of any potential allegations against foster parents. Foster parents are informed of their right to have an advocate of their choice present at meetings regarding the allegation and investigation. They are also offered the support of program staff to emotionally process the impact the allegation and investigation has on them and their family.

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.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents receive Pre-Service training and orientation around their role as a team member on the foster care treatment team. This includes participation in developing service plans and attending meetings and court hearings.
- Foster Parents have the responsibility to familiarize themselves with the Juvenile Court and DCFS permanency process.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Agency staff provide an orientation for Foster Parents regarding their role on the treatment team for the youth in their care, and the importance of their participation in meetings and hearings for the youth.
- Orientation and information regarding DCFS requirements and time lines for completion of service plans, Administrative Court Reviews and court hearings are discussed. This information is also available in the Foster Parent Handbook.

Allendale's foster care staff continually reinforces the importance of the foster parents' role as child advocates on the child welfare team. Foster parents, as integral members of the clinical treatment team, are encouraged to actively participate in child and family team meetings where service planning, permanency goals, and treatment strategies are recommended. Child and family team meetings are scheduled to accommodate foster parent availability. To advocate effectively, foster parents are further expected to participate in the numerous training opportunities made available. The PRIDE pre-service training addresses issues such as the purpose of the administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes. Allendale also keeps itself informed around additional relevant DCFS/Court sponsored training and encourages foster parent attendance.

Additionally staffs provide foster parents access to the DCFS and Agency handbook to address relevant issues. The handbook that each family receives covers court, ACRs and service plans. Foster parents are also surveyed to identify training needs around service planning, ACRs and court hearings such that these topics can be added to the training schedule as necessary. Caseworkers are available to discuss court process and answer questions as they arise, during regular visits.

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

Key Concepts:

- The Appeal Process is available to all Foster Parents and discussed in the Foster Parent Handbook.
- Foster parents are encouraged to communicate any concerns or disagreements with staff or other team members.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Agency staff orient Foster Parents to the Grievance Process during the initial licensing process, as well as updated and reviewed with Foster Parents annually.
- Updated Handbooks, which includes the Grievance Process, is provided to Foster Parents annually.

The Allendale appeal process is made available to all new foster parents and reviewed in the pre-service training. A written copy of this policy is given to each foster home by way of the Allendale Foster Parent Handbook. As a team member, foster parents are to voice their concerns or different perspectives as soon as possible, be it through the 24-hour on-call support, by requesting a meeting or consultation time, or utilizing one of the scheduled forums to communicate with each other. The Foster Parent Handbook is updated annually and distributed to foster parents. At this time the grievance process is reviewed with the foster parents. See attached grievance process.

15. *The responsibility to know and understand the importance of the 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.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents are to respect the fact that maintaining all records regarding the child are an important part of their role as a Foster Parent.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Foster Parents receive pre-service training and agency orientation regarding record-keeping. Written guidelines are reviewed annually and provided to foster families.
- The agency provides the Foster Parents with a tabbed binder for recording information and maintaining organization of the child's records.
- Foster parents are provided behavioral and medication logs to record for their child and receive reminders from staff at visits to utilize these to track the care of the child.

Upon placement of a child, Allendale provides child binders to the foster home to ensure that records are easily maintained. The binders contain records pertinent to the child's history and care including information on development, health, and education (i.e. 0-3 evaluations, medical/dental exams, mental health records, IEPs, etc.)

Foster parents are trained on record keeping during pre-service training, with written guidelines outlined in their annually updated Foster Parent Handbook. Staff is also trained regarding what information the foster parents are required to have on file.

Caseworkers assist foster parents in acquiring any needed information and/or records. Behavioral and Medication logs are provided to each foster parent and caseworkers assist foster parents in reviewing and recording their care of the child during home visits. Binders are reviewed by foster parents and caseworkers on a quarterly basis at the home.

16. *The responsibility to share information through the child welfare team, with the subsequent caregiver regarding the child's adjustments in the foster parent's home.*

Key Concepts:

- Foster Parents as team members are trained to share information with "a spirit of cooperation."
- Foster Parents participate in the process of transitioning the youth to his or her new placement.
- Foster Parents are to help the child record their personal history and accomplishments in a Life Book that moves with the child.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency seeks the input of all treatment team members weekly through home visits, clinical consultations, and other meetings.
- Information documented in Child and Family Team meetings, service plans, and the youth's binder of records are discussed with subsequent caregivers during transition meetings.
- The youth's binder of records follows him/her to any change in placement

As part of the treatment team foster parents are trained to regularly share information regarding the child's adjustment in the foster home with other members of the team. Often this takes place at the weekly in-home meetings with the foster care caseworker assigned to their home, but also through weekly or bi-weekly clinical consultation. Information may also be shared by phone if needed. The child's progress in services is reviewed at each child and family team meeting where additional service referrals are also assessed and implemented. Information from the child and family team meeting is documented in a quarterly staffing report. The child's service plan is formally reviewed at the administrative case review.

When a youth is transitioning from the foster home, transition meetings are held. The current caregiver is part of the transition meeting. All information gathered is made available to subsequent caregivers. The youth's records binder follows him/her to any subsequent placements. Additionally, the foster parent is encouraged to pass along all of the child's personal belongings, including Life Books, clothing, toys, etc; use of a suitcase or duffle bag is encouraged to help the youth feel like the move is positive and that they are important.

17. *The responsibility 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 the 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.

Key Concepts:

- Foster parents recognize the importance of incorporating the cultural traditions of the youth in their care into the rituals and routines of the foster home.
- Training around cultural topics is provided to foster parents.

Allendale Association does this by:

- In-service trainings on cultural diversity are provided to the foster care team which includes foster parents.
- During licensing home visits, foster parents are made aware of resources in the community which address cultural competence.
- Foster parents have suggested a "cultural resource fair" including: a potluck - with recipes for different food choices; how to classes around special hair and skin care techniques; cultural activities.

Some of the strategies utilized to date to help foster parents integrate the foster child's culture into their home and everyday life include: presentations by individual speakers (i.e. hair care for the African American child); ethnic storytelling; trips to the cultural museums. Allendale employs a culturally diverse staff that is available as a resource for the foster parents. Allendale foster parents of different cultures have also made themselves available to share cultural information amongst them. The foster care team, which includes foster parents, also attends in-service training on cultural diversity as well.

One of the most valuable sources of a foster child's cultural background is, of course, their biological family. Allendale foster parents are encouraged to develop relationship with their foster child's biological family when possible. This fosters a sense of "shared parenting" and promotes a deeper understanding of the cultural backgrounds that ground both foster and biological families.



Foster Care Program Manager



Director of Clinical and Community Services