

**Allendale Association Foster Care
Implementation Plan
2020**

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:

- Acknowledging that the foster parents' unique expertise and experience through including foster parents as members of the treatment team and involving them in the planning process and meetings for the youth.
- Recognizing foster parents' years of service and participation in formal recognition events.
- Working with the family to develop crisis plans and transition plans, and supporting the parenting decisions of the foster parents.
- Inviting feedback on the program from foster parents at any time, and on a quarterly basis, formally asking for foster parents to complete satisfaction surveys.

Foster parents have a central role in the treatment team. They frequently engage in dialogues with caseworkers, 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 proactively address issues or behaviors with the team as they arise in visits with the caseworker, quarterly staffing's, Clinical Consultations (CCs), or in meetings they can request at any time. CCs are regularly scheduled calls or meetings, where the focus is to identify issues and develop plans toward successful placement stabilization and achievement of the permanency goal.

Treatment Plan/Household Agreements are completed with foster parents before placement, or in cases of emergency placements, during the initial home visit. The caseworker will assist the foster parents in developing Treatment Plan/Household Agreements through hands-on training and examples of effective plans. Through collaboration and consultation, an alliance is forged among the members of the treatment team, including the foster parents, by having a shared understanding of the

permanency goal and an agreement about the necessary tasks to move toward that goal.

The staff of the Foster Care Program at 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 engages 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, staff is 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 by:

- Returning phone calls within 48 hours, for non-crisis issues.
- Having the Foster Care Director and Program Manager on three-way conference calls to consult on crisis issues after hours when 24/7 on-call is accessed.
- Foster Care Director and Program Manager are available directly to foster parents if concerns arise requiring a higher level of attention.
- 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 (e.g. loss of a relative, child hospitalization, non-foster child family illness, etc.), asking about needs, and offering support (e.g. 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 CCs regularly and at convenient times (e.g. 7:30 a.m. or 7 p.m., on opposite weeks to bi-weekly family therapy, etc.).

Foster parents are instrumental in the decision-making process regarding the child's needs and placement planning, particularly as it relates to their level of care. For example, the foster care staff prepare foster parents to participate in DCFS Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings. Foster parents 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 can be linked to their trauma history (trauma re-enactment) and in aid 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 semi-annual 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. 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 (e.g. The training schedule for the Allendale Association, lists of other DCFS-approved trainings provided to foster parents annually, etc.).

Allendale Association does this by:

- Connecting new foster parents to the DCFS pre-service training program (called PRIDE) and to the Educational Advocacy course sponsored by DCFS.
- Providing new foster parents a full orientation to the agency and to policies and procedures of the program.
- Offering foster parent training sessions at least nine months of the year.
- Scheduling foster parent networking time before monthly training sessions, with a meal and childcare available.
- Providing the opportunity for new foster parents or foster parents in new situations 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).
- Assisting foster parents with developing an individualized training plan.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requires, per DCFS Rule 402: Licensing Standards for Foster Homes, 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.

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 asked to provide feedback on what they learned from the training, what is useful to them, what modifications are desired (e.g. training format, content, delivery, presenters, scheduling, etc.). Their insights are valued and incorporated into the training program development for the coming training year. This review is typically held at the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Event to maximize attendance and participation in this process. At the 2020 Implementation Plan Meeting, several new foster parents gave feedback on some very important training needs and the team will look into them for this training year (e.g. cultural hair care/style, Autism/Spectrum/ABA Intervention, PTSD in the brain).

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 (CFTMs). 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 meetings to understand what is most helpful to foster parents. As Allendale Association is made aware of new supplemental training offered by DCFS, foster parents will be informed. This past year parents shared feedback that they would benefit from better training on education and resources. This feedback will be incorporated into additional trainings (supplemental) that we would be willing to hold outside of the monthly Thursday trainings.

The Director of Foster Care and the Allendale 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 (VTC) 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, as well as DCFS-sponsored in-service trainings.

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: recreational activities available to foster children in the community free of charge, how foster parents access the local food collective to obtain groceries at reduced rates, and behavioral management techniques that 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. FY2020, the foster parents also suggested an informal social media outlet for connection (Allendale parents). The team agreed to link them with their contact information if someone wanted to be the spokesperson, and if the team had retained consent from everyone involved.

Allendale provides nursing consultation for foster families caring for medically complex children. The nurse is available to train foster parents on specific needs such as diabetes or gastrostomy tube care. The nurse meets with the foster parents and the child at least once a quarter and is available to the family for additional training and information as needed.

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:

- Providing emotional and practical support through monthly visits to the home by staff.
- Providing a contact sheet with numbers for the caseworker, agency 24-hour On-Call Line, and members of the child's treatment team.
- Providing foster parents with the Foster Parent Handbook, which includes SASS (Screening, Assessment, and Support Services), Healthworks, and other resource information.
- Gathering contact information for community resources and distributing the information to foster parents, if needed.
- Providing support to foster parents to help locate transportation for medical appointments for parents who work or have other conflicting responsibilities.

Every foster home receives an Allendale organizational chart, resource list, and information around after-hours emergency numbers. This is included on a caseworker's placement checklist to ensure this information is provided in a timely manner. This also will include starting FY20, a New Child Checklist that is issued each new placement with all relevant parties, contact information, and identifying information. This is to shore up any lapse in foster parents knowledge of who to contact for assistance with new children.

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 Foster Care are also available to provide further assistance during times of crisis. On-call staff will 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 30 days of placement, foster parents are invited to participate in a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM), where the youth's service needs are reviewed and any needed assistance in accessing services is explored.

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. Ongoing needs assessments occur during the ongoing face-to-face contact between caseworker and the foster family. In addition, Clinical Consultations (CCs) provide 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 ongoing basis (e.g. referrals, resource locations, phone numbers etc.).

Allendale caseworkers schedule home visits at times that are convenient for foster parents and allow for ample time to spend time speaking not just with the foster children in the home, but with the foster parents, as well. Caseworkers ensure that the family does not feel rushed during home visits and has opportunities to ask questions and seek input on how to best care for their foster child. Caseworkers are also readily available via email or phone to answer foster parents questions and concerns in a timely manner.

In the summer of 2018, Allendale Foster Care began a Foster Care Closet, comprised of donated (new and gently used) items that is open to be utilized by all foster families when they attend training. This closet fills a room in the program department office and has been well-received.

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:

- Providing a monthly board payment for foster children in the care of the foster parent.
- Providing funding and respite, as well as activity/enrichment funds, on a monthly basis for foster parents with specialized foster children in their home.
- Assessing the child's needs formally at the time of placement, at Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), and at any time that new issues arise to identify what resources and financial support is needed.

Allendale makes financial checks for board payments available on the fourth working day of the month after 4:00 p.m. Foster parents can choose to regularly pick up their check at the Bradley Counseling Center office, have them mailed to their residence, or utilize direct deposit. Allendale also provides reimbursement for respite care on a monthly basis for children in Specialized Foster Care.

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 (IA) and Service Plan development processes. Assessment is repeated at each quarterly CFTM 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 child's individualized goals. Resources are sought to meet the child's goals in their foster home placement and goals working toward achieving 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. It is then approved by the Director of Foster Care. Staff also seek scholarships and funding to provide additional recreational, educational, vocational, or other opportunities of interest to youth.

For children in Specialized Foster Care, enrichment funds are available for 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.

For families with specialized foster children, at each quarterly meeting, foster parents are informed of the amount of enrichment funds left for the child that year. Additionally, families are sent a blank respite sheet on a monthly basis to submit to their caseworker, which serves as a reminder these funds are available. The team of foster parents was reminded this year that they should *always* reach out to the director for any questions surrounding fiscal, monetary, or other payment inquiries. The director reminded them that she is more than happy to research, investigate, and correct anything that does not seem to make sense to parents.

Any financial disputes are handled individually, and resolved in a timely manner utilizing the following process:

- When a payment concern arises, the 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 be allowed active involvement in service planning for the child.
- It is important for foster parents to be aware 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 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:

- While assessing placement, Allendale staff explores 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.
- Providing an individualized form listing family and collaterals and 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.
- Providing foster parents with training on how to support ties with biological family and cultural identity.
- Including foster parents in planning for foster youth's visits with biological family during home visits and at quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs). Both the youth's connection to biological family and also the foster family's schedule needs are respected.
- Reviewing the creation and updating of Life Books at quarterly CFTMs, which brings awareness to how familial and cultural connections are being sustained in the child's life.
- Including foster parents in CFTMs, Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), and other DCFS court hearings and meetings, when applicable.

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 along with biological parents. This includes discussion, but is not limited to, ways to make visits and communication with the biological family most productive while also coordinating around the schedule needs of the foster parents.

In addition to the general history of a youth, information around connections the youth has with biological parents is highlighted. Discussions regarding current visitations with biological family take place and visit plans are reviewed at the time of pre-placement visits and throughout the placement. Considerations to the foster parents

schedule are taken when scheduling parent/child and sibling visits. Level of supervision on parent/child visits are also discussed with the foster parents so that they are able to offer insight into issues that may arise. 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 CFTMs, which brings awareness to how familial and cultural connections are being sustained in the child's life. This year, the casework team has agreed to assist in the accumulation of letters, photos, timelines of events, and other life details that foster parents indicated are hard to find at times. This will become a check box on our CFTM list, and assessed throughout the year, when children and foster families are seeking more information or pictures.

Regularly scheduled Clinical Consultations (CCs) are offered for every child that includes participation by the biological and foster parents, other identified relatives, and treatment team members. Through these ongoing 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 youth is seeking a family member and during a search of past documents received by a caseworker lead to opportunities to re-connect them). 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.

Caseworkers are required to share the outcomes and updates from meetings or hearings 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. It was also noted that the families would like more comprehensive updates about the ongoings in court and any decisions made. They indicated in our dialogue, that they do not always understand what has transpired, and would like for the next visit to include an update and thorough explanation. The team committed to this process.

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 ensure 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 parenting mentors to birth families, foster parents 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 the foster parent's inclusiveness in appointments and educational activities for the youth, full utilization of foster parents as treatment team members, and ongoing 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:

- Providing support (e.g. though education) to foster parents through investigating all complaints in a timely manner – the same day if possible.
- Encouraging foster parents to identify an advocate to be present during investigative processes.
- Assisting the foster family with the appeal process and providing support throughout the investigation process.

When there is a licensing complaint, the agency investigates this complaint in a timely fashion. The Allendale Foster Care Family Development Specialist or licensing worker sets up a meeting at the foster family home. If the complaint originates from a source outside of the agency, the Foster Care Family Development Specialist or licensing worker notifies the foster family as soon as the complaint is received, but no later than 24 business hours after its receipt. If the complaint originates from within the agency, the caseworker or Foster Care Family Development Specialist or licensing worker will notify the foster parent within 24 business hours from when the complaint is made, when possible.

As part of the investigative process, the licensing worker or the Foster Care Family Development Specialist or licensing worker interviews the foster child, the foster parents, and other parties as necessary. The investigative process is completed within 30 days of receiving or making the initial complaint. If the investigation is incomplete after 30 days, the foster parents will be notified prior to requesting an extension from DCFS. 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 (and/or Foster Care Family Development Specialist), the Foster Care Program Manager/agency licensing supervisor, and Director of Foster Care. At this time, the licensing standards that have been violated and any resulting corrective 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 Regional Licensing Administrator.

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. Foster parents are also made aware of the Illinois Foster Parent Advocacy Office line in the event they would desire to utilize this for support.

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.
- All staff of the Foster Care Team are available to help the foster parent understand the youth's mental health needs, which aids the family in more effectively understanding and managing the needs of the youth.
- Agency staff will provide Life Books to foster parents to complete with their foster children and, whenever possible, information regarding the child to assist in doing so.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Providing 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, at home visits, and also during Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs).

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 attempt to share all information at intake of a placement. This information can include, mental health and medical diagnoses, previous number and nature of placements, behavioral episodes that relate to diagnoses or trauma, trauma history, school information, court processes and current permanency goal of the court, medications, allergies, medical history, history of psychiatric hospitalizations, and any and all other pertinent information to the child themselves.

The team continues to commit to sharing any and all further information gathered or ascertained after the case comes into care and placement in the foster home. These check-ins will also be added to the regular 90-day CFTM list of tasks and so in preparation for the meetings, supervisors will review what is being disseminated to foster parents. This is also a regular conversation in staff supervision (weekly) as to what new information has surfaced regarding a child in our care.

Regularly scheduled Clinical Consultations (CCs) 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 CCs at times when key participants can attend. New information is often available from the school, therapist, and/or other collateral contacts. 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 picture of their child. Additional CCs are 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. CCs incorporate 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.
- Full disclosure meetings will be held with foster parents before placement occurs (except in cases of emergency placements).

Allendale Association does this by:

- Training staff and foster parents regarding pertinent policies and procedures around sharing information regarding the child to be placed.
- Providing foster parents written documentation regarding medical history, educational history, service planning (including visitation arrangements), and case history of the child.
- Facilitating full disclosure meetings, as well as transitional meetings and visits prior to placement.
- Communicating, which is an ongoing process. Staff is responsible for sharing information during weekly home visits, Clinical Consultations (CCs), Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), court hearings, and Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs).
- At the time of placement, Allendale Staff utilize the CFS 600-4: Sharing Information with the Caregiver, a form which ensures foster parents have necessary information on the child or determines a plan for the caseworker to share that information with the caregivers in case necessary information is not available at time of placement.

Prior to placing a child in a foster home, meetings facilitating full disclosure are held which include 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.

If the child was previously placed in residential treatment, the foster parent receives specific information about the child's presenting behaviors, the status of those behaviors, and any new behaviors that have occurred while in residential treatment. Foster parents also receive information about the effectiveness of the interventions used in residential treatment and behaviors they may exhibit in the home. The foster parent also receives direction in how to structure their home for the maximum benefit of the child through assistance in creating a Home Agreement and Treatment Plan.

The content of these documents has 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 and prior to accepting placement of the youth, the prospective foster parents sign an acknowledgment that the information was received, with check boxes indicating that they have received all information known to the agency. This acknowledgment also states that the foster parent 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. Caseworkers are held accountable for sharing of information with foster parents through a number of venues including: CFTMs, clinical staffings, weekly reviews during team meetings, and individual supervision. Foster parents annually (during licensing monitoring) sign a form acknowledging that they have received and reviewed their rights and responsibilities, which is required to be maintained 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:

- Treating 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.
- Notifying and encouraging foster parents to participate at court hearings, Administrative Care Reviews (ACRs), Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), and regularly scheduled Clinical Consultations (CCs).

Allendale Association believes that as integral members of the child's treatment team foster parents should be included and invited to the CFTM. Staff will set up expectations with birth parents that foster parents are to be included in these meetings in order to facilitate communication between foster and birth parents for effective co-parenting. In order to encourage this, staff will consider both foster and birth parent's schedules when scheduling CFTM's. Foster parents are asked and expected to give their thoughts and concerns from their unique point of view. These concerns will be given the same consideration as any other member of the child's team. The staff person chairing the staffing will ensure that this occurs.

Caseworkers consult with foster parents around scheduling of CCs and child staffings in a timely manner. These staffings include, but are not limited to: educational, quarterly, and legal staffings. 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. This fiscal year, the team has begun a new process of scheduling CFTMs whereby the next date is chosen during the previous meeting, and so it can be added to an agency wide calendar, tracked and notices can be sent out sooner. This is also so that if there happens to be a conflict in time, the time can be changed to accommodate the foster parents sooner.

Foster parents are not only notified of staffings, court hearings, and ACR's relating to their foster child, they are also strongly encouraged to attend these meetings, hearings, and staffings. If a foster parent is unable to attend any meeting, hearing, 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, hearing, or staffing. 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. Caseworkers are held

accountable in weekly supervision, for coordinating the scheduling of the comprehensive staffings such that all applicable foster care team members are available to attend.

As part of the professional team, foster parents are supported in maintaining regular contact with any service provider involved with their foster child. 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

Foster parents are required to participate in DCFS' Education Advocacy training prior to their foster home license renewal so that they understand the vital role they play in a child's education team. Allendale also regularly offers in-service trainings on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process. Foster parents are regularly reminded about their role as the child's Education Advocate and the rights and responsibilities that entails.

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 a candid relationship between the biological family and foster family in order to facilitate better care of the child and achievement of the permanency plan.
- Protection of the biological family's confidentiality and personal information.
- Information that is able to be disclosed will be shared with foster family.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Assisting in and encourage foster parents to develop a candid relationship with the biological family in order to facilitate better care of the child, information shared, and achievement of the permanency plan. This is often the key to the success of the placement.
- Supporting foster parents in volunteering to serve as mentors to biological family of the child in their care, and guide that process.
- Giving Full Disclosure verbally for emergency placements and formal, written Full Disclosure, via procedure and paperwork, within 10 days of emergency placement.

Extra documents can be released to foster parents with the consent of DCFS. Releasing information to those foster parents converting to adoptive parents is spelled

out in the Adoption Act, with which the agency fully complies. 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. 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 (e.g. favorite foods, activities enjoyed, etc.). Laying the groundwork for ongoing 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. This is done through guidance and assistance from the agency team.

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 the 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, once a relationship has been established.

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 in advance with all team members; foster parents are part of this team. A written plan is developed with input from team discussions unless there is imminent risk of harm for the child in placement and then they are temporarily put in place and then later documented.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Involving foster parents in all aspects of case planning, and input from foster parents is sought regarding placement matters.
- Facilitating transitional planning in order to help both the child and foster family with the transitioning process.

- Supporting 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 per discussion at any time.

Plans for a change in the placement of a child is discussed in staffings and at the Administrative Case Review (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 (CFS 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 decisions regarding change in placement, 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, per request, at Allendale Association, and is 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.

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:

- Notifying foster parents regarding upcoming court hearings regarding the youth with as much notice as possible.
- Encouraging the foster parents to participate in all hearings for the youth in their care. Ongoing communication regarding upcoming hearings takes place during home visits, regularly scheduled Clinical Consultations (CCs), as well as at Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs).

Regularly scheduled CCs 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. 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 Foster Care 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 Pre-Service Training.

Foster parent feedback around timely notification of court proceedings and their involvement in the court process is solicited during quarterly comprehensive CFTMs. If this feedback arises, it 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 to be considered first for placement if placement is being sought again for that youth.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Sharing information regarding the previous of the child. Staff and the foster parent mutually assess the viability of having the child return to their foster home.

When a child leaves foster care only to return to the foster care system, the caseworker 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 have served as the previous case management agency for the youth. 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 interests of the child (e.g. whether there were reasons that the previous foster placement disrupted and were not recommended again). However, returning to a previous foster home may provide the child with a sense of continuity of relationships and care. These previous relationships (despite ending previously) can sometimes later, be viable. Those relationships often provide for ongoing comfort, familiarity, and consistency, attributes that foster children often lack. These homes are known to

children, and after a disruption can be a source of stability, even if they are only temporary, and can assist in stabilizing them through yet another difficult time.

Additionally, foster parents have the responsibility to alert Allendale (as their licensing agency) if they are considering a placement of a child that was previously placed with them (or a new child) if the case is not already case managed by Allendale.

The agency regularly follows up with foster parents to ensure their placement preferences are on file. The team has also agreed to make calls for every placement that is a viable agency intake, regardless of their preference, starting FY20. This is to ensure that parents are aware of their status with placements, that they are not being overlooked for placement, and so that they have a good idea of the placement options currently needed in the state. Also, sometimes foster parents may find that a placement that was not typically in their desired population to be very successful.

14. *The right to have timely access to the child's placement agency exists 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 that is detailed in writing in the Foster Parent Handbook given every foster family 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 Consultations (CCs) also provide 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 significant foster parent concerns.

Should a conflict arise, the Allendale grievance process is the first step in resolving conflicts. Each foster parent is encouraged to reach out to the Foster Care Program Manager or Director of Foster Care at any time with concerns, feedback or complaints. The director and program manager provide an "open door/phone" policy and ensure that their contact information is readily available. Additionally the management team encourages relationships with all parents through involvement in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), consultations, meetings, and trainings/support dinners. With this relationship built, it is Allendale Association's hope that foster parents are familiar with and comfortable calling all staff, including management should they have a concern.

If there is ever a concern that the director does not feel he/she can resolve, parents can be referred to Allendale Association's Senior Vice President of Clinical Services. In other words, if a conflict cannot be resolved at the base level, the matter is reviewed by higher levels of the Allendale Administration.

The second step is the more formal DCFS Appeal Process, which is found in the Foster Parent Handbook given to each foster home during initial licensing.

There is no harassment or retaliation against foster parents who appeal. Allendale works toward a quick resolution to all issues. The appeal process is discussed during the annual, mandatory in-service on policies and procedures, and mailed annually to

all foster parents along with the current year's implementation plan and grievance form. This generally occurs in the month of September.

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 Office of the Attorney General: 1-800-722-9124.

Foster parents are informed about the Foster Parent Hotline (1-800-722-9124), 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: home visits, Clinical Consultations (CCs), and Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs).
- Encouraging foster parents to complete Life Books with the foster children in their home, and check in quarterly at CFTMs about progress in completing such books.

Through the PRIDE training and ongoing consultations, foster parents learn to take responsibility for evaluating when and what to communicate to the foster care team, as well as when to communicate it. There are certain issues (e.g. 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 visit to the foster home in which behavior logs are reviewed and discussed, during regularly scheduled CCs with service providers, or at CFTMs.

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, as 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 matter 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 to 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:

- Initial pre-service and ongoing in-service trainings, as well as foster home licensure, address confidentiality of information related to foster children and their families.
- Subsequently, annual training is provided around DCFS Policy and Procedures, including issues of confidentiality and agency staff models this boundary in all communications.

The Foster Parent Handbook that each foster family receives contains not only the Foster Parent Law, but also Rule 402, Licensing Standards for Foster Homes. 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 and during all semi-annual and annual licensing monitoring visits. This year, a discussion

about social media was held, and foster parents were reminded that they are not to disclose any identifying information about their children on social media outlets. They are to use strong discretion with posting of family photos whatsoever. Also, the parents were reminded that they are responsible for upholding the social media agreement for all children over 10 and who have signed this DCFS form (CFS 2034: Social Media/Mobile Safety Agreement) with the agency.

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 assist 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 (ACRs), court hearings, and other meetings provides access to information that is frequent and ongoing, 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.

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

Key Concepts:

- Advocating for any child requires that parents understand the child's strengths, limitations, and interests. Foster parents are responsible for speaking up for the best outcome for the child placed in their home, and in supporting the child in advocating for himself or herself.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Agency staff connects foster parents with others who advocate for the foster children (not limited to): Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Guardian ad Litem (GALs), school staff, and DCFS case reviewers.
- Staff enlists foster parent participation in Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), Integrated Assessments (IAs), court hearings, Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), and Clinical Consultations (CCs).
- 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, other advocates include CASA, the GAL, school staff, and DCFS case review staff. Great effort is made to schedule CCs 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 through mindful dialogue by all members in consideration of the individual clinical and permanency issues of the child. When issues arise, clearer advocacy efforts on behalf of the child and better outcomes for children is aided by clarification of roles in CCs.

Caseworkers not only inform foster parents of staffings, ACR's, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings, IA activities, 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. 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 ACRs, and case staff assist foster parents in understanding and, when necessary, completing the process.

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 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:

- Foster parents are responsible for leading by example, especially in referring to the child's family with dignity.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Pre-service training and Allendale orientation initially addresses issues of treating all with mutual respect. Ongoing training continues to provide opportunities to learn about birth family dynamics.
- Caseworkers meet individually with foster children, foster parents, and biological families enabling them to share information and express feelings.
- Surveys are distributed to elicit feedback and detailing areas of concern.
- The agency assists, by supporting foster parents through Clinical Consultations (CCs), in looking at their own biases/feelings about biological 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, during the agency licensing process, and foster parent orientation. Continuing opportunities to learn about birth family dynamics are available during ongoing scheduled trainings. Caseworkers continue to address these issues, offer support, and provide new

information about the birth parents as it becomes known and not in violation of the birth family's confidentiality.

CCs are facilitated with all members of the foster care team where foster parents are supported in looking at their own attitudes about the child's biological 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. This has assisted in greater understanding of enduring preferences, biases, etc. 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 ensure that all parties are treated equitably and with respect. Caseworkers schedule to meet individually with foster children, foster parents, and biological family enabling each of them to share information and express their feelings openly.

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, referral meetings/discussions, continuous discussion of training needs via the agency's "Foster Parent Training Plan," and providing trainings to better understand the Youth in Care. Clinical support utilizing the agency's REStArT model is provided on an ongoing 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. Caseworkers will also encourage foster parents to share their strengths as a parent during quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs).

When the agency receives a new referral they believe would be a good fit in a foster parent's home, agency staff will conduct a phone call with the foster parent 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 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 Foster Care Director and/or 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 caseworkers 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, ongoing Clinical Consultations (CCs), quarterly CFTMs, 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 encouraged to join agency staff for CCs, 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 CCs to evaluate the effectiveness of the team's work with the child to reach his or her permanency goal.

Additionally, foster parents participate in a formal meeting to "debrief" after placements end or permanency is achieved. 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 for social and professional networking.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Providing dinner and child care before and during training sessions.
- Specifically scheduling time before training sessions to allow foster parents the chance to talk to other foster parents and share ideas, obtain support, and identify and develop foster parent connections.
- Providing social opportunities such as picnics and holiday parties.
- Encouraging use of respite by foster parents.
- Facilitating conversations between 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. In addition, Allendale will provide dinner and child care during this time in order to help support foster parents in attending who may not otherwise be able to attend due to time constraints or child care barriers. 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.

Allendale staff will obtain permission from foster parents to share their information with other foster parents in the event that a family is going through a similar difficult or unfamiliar situation (e.g. returning a child to birth parents).

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 during 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."
- Agency sends out training schedules for trainings offered through Allendale as trainings are scheduled.

By informing foster parents of community and agency training opportunities, caseworkers 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, ongoing Clinical Consultations (CCs), quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), 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.

The annual training calendar is developed with input from foster parents who are surveyed in writing on a semi-annual basis to discuss current training needs respective to the child in their care. In addition, information on PRIDE training modules are available regularly via the Virtual Training Center (VTC) online. Foster parents are also encouraged to attend the DCFS sponsored training for caregivers, as well as other community workshops.

Recognizing the importance of continuing education, foster care licensing staff facilitate ongoing 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," which is discussed during quarterly CFTMs with caseworkers, and formally reviewed semi-annually by licensing staff during licensing monitoring visits. 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 training

through the VTC. 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:

- Foster parents identify their own personal resources for support.

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 foster parents to continuously identify strategies to support the youth.
- Ongoing clinical support is provided utilizing the agency's REStArT treatment model.
- Additional support resources offered by the agency may include mentoring, individual therapy, and/or family therapy.
- 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 to aid in 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. Behavior logs are distributed to aid foster parents in data collection. 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 for children in specialized foster care. A child's level of care may also be reevaluated through DCFS' Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) procedure in order to help stabilize a child in a placement.

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 (Relational Re-Enactment Systems Approach to Treatment), 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 (e.g. 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 ongoing basis. Regularly scheduled Clinical Consultations (CCs) are 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 to the foster parent during consultation, and to track what the stressor is for a child, the level of problematic behavior or issue in response to the stressor, 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 (Screening, Assessment, and Support Services) 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. 24 hours a day and seven days a week, an on-call worker is available to help foster parents obtain services outside of regular business hours. Training around the purpose and availability of stabilization services is conducted at the agency orientation training, during annual Policy and Procedure Training, and during caseworker visits, as appropriate.

When a foster family voluntarily decides to have a child removed, a written 14-day notice must be 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.

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 parents consider their own personal resources for support (e.g. relatives, friends) and agency staff consider other foster homes and the

child's established resources (e.g. mentor, volunteers) to develop a respite plan.

Allendale Association does this by:

- 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 (CFTMs) and new resources identified as needed to support rest, connection, and support for foster parents.
- Foster homes have the option of placing their home on a voluntary hold.
- In order to respect the daily routine of foster families, when a previously scheduled appointment or visit is cancelled last minute, Allendale staff will remain responsible for the child for the duration of that appointment.
- If necessary, Allendale will enforce that biological parents and siblings need to confirm 24 hours in advance before visits to respect the foster family's time.

Foster PRIDE pre-service training and ongoing 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 strategies to identify and cope with the stress of fostering. Allendale's 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, home visits, and weekly or biweekly Clinical Consultations (CCs), 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 pro-active approach positively impacts the youth's stabilization and subsequently reduces the stress on the foster family. Quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs) provide further opportunities to identify potential problem areas and recommend possible resources. However, at any time, the foster parent may request additional times to meet with the youth and team to identify plans that will aid in stabilizing the youth.

Caseworkers work with foster parents during visits to expand upon their self-awareness and assist in minimizing stress. Staff work with foster parents 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 staff assists 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, the agency’s other foster parents, and other client resources (e.g. mentor, volunteer, etc.) to develop a respite plan. Respite plans are thereafter reviewed quarterly at the CFTM. Allendale’s Foster Care Program provides a monthly respite allotment for children in Specialized Foster Care, which foster parents are encouraged to use. 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.

Agency staff encourage foster parents to share the routine and structure with their respite provider, so as to trust the respite caregiver to maintain similar expectations of the youth in order to 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 CCs or CFTMs to learn 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 foster parents 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 then again when they accept their first 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 cannot do.

Allendale Association does this by:

- The agency provides professional development opportunities that are open to staff and foster parents.
- The agency includes the foster parents in clinical meetings, Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), Administrative Court Reviews (ACRs), 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 trainings for foster parents, as well as 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, biannually, 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 schedules. Foster parent training, participation in clinical consultation, involvement in court appearances, ACRs, and other educational topics assist to expand the foster parent's knowledge base of the child welfare system.

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 (e.g. 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 annually as part of licensing monitoring, 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 but at a minimum, it is addressed annually. 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. Foster parents are also reminded of their responsibility as a mandated reporter if they indicate they are aware of abuse or neglect occurring in another home.

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 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 Case Reviews (ACRs), 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 (CFTMs) where service planning, permanency goals, and treatment strategies are recommended. Agency staff encourage birth parents to include foster parents in CFTMs. CFTMs are scheduled with both the foster parents' and the birth parent's schedules in mind. If birth parents are not in agreement with foster parents participating in CFTMs, a separate meeting may be scheduled with the foster parents in order to support them in their care of the child.

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 ACRs, client service plans, and court processes. Allendale also keeps itself informed around additional relevant DCFS/Court sponsored trainings and encourages foster parent attendance.

Additionally staff provides foster parents access to the DCFS and agency handbooks to address relevant issues. The handbook that each family receives from the agency 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 updating and reviewing the process with foster parents annually.
- Updated Foster Parent Handbooks, which include the Grievance Process, is provided to foster parents annually.

The Allendale appeal process is made available to all new foster parents. 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, 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 as needed 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 is an important part of their role as a foster parent.

Allendale Association does this by:

- Foster parents receive pre-service and in-service training, as well as agency orientation regarding record-keeping. Written guidelines are reviewed annually and provided to foster families during licensing monitoring.
- 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 behavior 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.

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. Behavior and medication logs are provided to each foster parent on a monthly basis, and caseworkers assist foster parents in reviewing and recording their care of the child during home visits. Record keeping is reviewed with foster parents during licensing monitoring visits (via CFS 590: Foster Family Home Licensing Compliance Record and CFS 597-FFH: Foster Family Home Licensing Monitoring Record).

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:

- As team members, foster parents 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 (CCs), and other meetings.
- Information documented in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), 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 in-home meetings with the foster care caseworker assigned to their home, but also through CCs and CFTMs. Information may also be

shared by phone or other method of communication 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 CFTM is documented in a quarterly staffing report. The child's service plan is formally reviewed at the Administrative Case Review (ACR).

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. Additionally, the foster parent is required 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 respectful of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his or her own family; the responsibility to recognize the increased importance of 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 and caseworker home visits, foster parents are made aware of resources in the community which address cultural competence, as needed.
- 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, and 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 (e.g. hair care for the African American child), ethnic storytelling, and 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, 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. One way this is achieved is through encouraging birth parents to allow foster families to participate in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs). Also, foster parents are encouraged, if appropriate, to include biological families in significant events, such as school plays, sporting events, birthdays, and holidays. This allows birth families to convey certain familial traditions around these life events.

Foster Care Program Manager

Director of Foster Care