

Our Year 2007 plan follows. *ChildServ* will implement the law according to the following:

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

ChildServ holds in high regard the knowledge and skills of foster parents. Our policies, procedures, and staff training exemplify dignity, respect, and consideration of this challenging role of raising foster children. Professionalism in all of our interactions with foster parents is essential. We hire and train personnel who understand the tremendous challenge of fostering children. *ChildServ* builds upon these principles through our Foster Parent Advisory Council (FPAC) and by using foster parents as trainers. The FPAC is open to all foster parents who can attend meetings. Program staff assists FPAC with logistics while management provides guidance and solicits feedback from foster parents regarding their concerns and recommendations. The purpose of the meetings is to assure that the Agency continues to develop policies and procedures that are user friendly and considerate to our foster parents. FPAC will meet at a minimum quarterly. Meetings will provide a forum for addressing issues relating to the care of children, Agency and DCFS policies, and program services to foster parents. FPAC can submit to the Agency recommendations for changes related to the quality of care of children and recommendations to improve foster parent and Agency relationships. To emphasize the dignity and worth of foster parents, *ChildServ* uses the assistance of experienced foster parents whenever possible in orientation meetings, media events and the training of new foster parents.

Foster parents are provided information regarding the existence of FPAC, its functions, and scheduled meetings through our monthly training notification letters which go out to all foster parents and at all of our monthly trainings. The same is true for the opportunity for foster parents to become a trainer for the Agency. Foster parents are also surveyed via questionnaire as to how *ChildServ* can assist them and improve.

A copy of this **2007** Plan will be mailed, emailed or personally delivered to all foster parents. A copy in Spanish will be available to all who need or request one. Licensing will give a copy to all newly licensed homes. Case Managers or Licensing staff will also give a copy to all Unlicensed Relative Providers. Foster parents who receive The Plan are asked to sign an Acknowledgement of Receipt to be retained in the licensing file or Unlicensed Provider file. The plan is available on our website, can be sent by email, and copies are available at every *ChildServ* office.

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

ChildServ believes in the importance of preliminary and ongoing training and professional development of our foster parents.

All foster parents are notified by mail and/or by telephone of the trainings that are available that month. They are also provided with the yearly schedule of training at the beginning of the training cycle year and it is available at each training event.

Training dates are scheduled to coincide with the mailing dates of foster parent payments so that those who attend have the added benefit of receiving their checks in person. The 2007 schedule was included handed out at our November 21 and November 28, 2006 foster parent meeting. The schedule will also be included in our December Foster Parent Bulletin, a newsletter document that was instituted in October, 2005 that includes the training announcement and information for the month, other announcements, and DCFS and/or agency policy and procedure information. The foster parents are polled individually for topics and suggestions for speakers to insure that the training fits their needs. At the end of each training session, we ask foster parents and staff to fill out an evaluation form. On this form too, is a place to suggest future training topics.

ChildServ sends prospective foster and adoptive parents to the Foster/Adopt Pride Pre-Service (Pride) Training administered through Harold Washington College. Foster parents are also provided with information on the availability of Pride Module Training by the Licensing staff. Recommendations for foster parents to attend are based on worker advice and foster parents expressed interest or need. A foster parent may be required to attend as part of a corrective action plan after a founded license violation.

ChildServ provides additional training for Project 90 and Teen Mom foster parents and invites other foster parents as well. A survey will be administered periodically ascertaining foster parent interest in being trainers, the resources they need to make it happen, and their availability for a training of trainers.

Staff are encouraged to co-train with the foster parents by attending trainings. Supervisors also often attend and may make it an expectation that specific staff attend. Supervisors rotate responsibility among themselves for hosting the trainings at the various *ChildServ* offices.

Administrative staff from the main office are similarly encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunity to be trained with our foster parents.

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

To ensure 24 hour/7 day availability of emergency support, foster parents are provided with updated Foster Care Phone Lists. The List is organized to reflect the organizational structure/"chain of command" at each of our three program sites. It is the internal procedure of the agency to return calls within 48 hours. If more immediate response is needed, foster parents are encouraged to go up the chain of command and/or contact the site Office Coordinator for assistance. Emergency pager numbers are on the List and on worker and supervisor voicemail messages, and pagers are carried by program supervisors on a rotational basis for two weeks at a time. An internal emergency response system is in place. Due to the language requirements (Spanish) of our Burgos cases, all caseworkers on this team are "on call" and a separate list designating Spanish-speaking personnel is provided to these foster parents. During business hours, staff at any site can assist foster parents in making contact with the appropriate caseworker, supervisor or administrator. *Staff* assists foster parents in accessing emergency services either internally through *ChildServ* staff or externally through emergency services such as SASS/CARES

(telephone number 800/345-9049) or referral to a System of Care (SOC) provider. Emergency numbers are also included on the Placement Agreement form.

4. Foster Parents have the right to receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with the care needs of the child as specified in the Service Plan.

Foster Parents can elect to pick up their check at the office or have them mailed. Foster Parents will receive timely reimbursement, except for school expenses that DCFS reimburses through the Exceptional Payments Request. We provide Foster Parents with a schedule of when they can pick up or have their checks mailed. Information on Foster Parent payment schedules is available at any foster care site. See our attached Year 2006/2007 Providers Payment Schedule. For approved additional expenses, all requests for payment are submitted by the case manager and signed by the Program Director, Vice President of Programs and/or President will result in a check being promptly issued by the Finance Department. Foster Parents who have a concern about their payment are referred to the Program Director for prompt resolution of their payment concern. Foster parents are notified in advance when there is going to be an adjustment to their board payment.

Several Foster Parents have requested the option of direct deposit for the Regular Board Payments. *ChildServ*'s current software capabilities do not enable us to honor this request; however, *ChildServ* is presently exploring other payment options.

ChildServ internal appeal/grievance process is the avenue for foster parents to resolve payment issues.

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

It is the practice of *ChildServ* to provide a safe, stable, and caring environment for all children in foster care placement. The purpose is to eliminate multiple placements of children which impede their development and permanency options. Foster parents are always encouraged to participate in the planning for their foster children. DCFS notifies the foster parent directly about Administrative Case Reviews (ACR's), where placement plans are discussed. In addition to the DCFS notification of scheduled case reviews, *ChildServ* case manager notifies foster parents of scheduled reviews in writing as well as in person during home visits as part of the *ChildServ* Contact Verification Form. In addition, foster parents are encouraged to participate in the development of the plan to elicit feedback on the child's progress. The case manager reminds parents to attend. Foster parent participation is actively sought by telephone or in person when they are invited and encouraged to attend by the case manager. Joint planning takes place at this time. We need to state too, that joint planning is an ongoing endeavor during all contacts between Agency staff and foster parents with children in placement. *ChildServ* recognizes the importance of using many methods to contact foster parents. Families are notified by telephone of ACR cancellations as soon as it is practical after the change.

In preparation for the ACR, the case manager will take into consideration the foster parents' input in regards to the plan including visitation and allowable methods of communication. In order to keep foster parents fully informed as to the status of children in their care, it is the responsibility of the case manager to inform them promptly of any changes in the child's case plan or permanency goal. Foster parents are given a copy of any part of the plan for which they are responsible. Caseworker involvement of foster parents in the planning is documented on the Home visit note/case entry note and in supervision documentation. Foster parents with children in therapy are invited to the Agency quarterly treatment planning staffing to assist in planning for the child's future goals and objectives. At the end of the staffing they are requested to sign the staffing form indicating their understanding of, and/or agreement with, the plan.

ChildServ makes every effort to maintain placements except when necessary to move to a pre-adoptive home, reunite with siblings, move to a higher level of care, or due to risk of harm. The staff is committed to working with foster parents to become skilled for the level of care the child requires. This means that a foster parent will be trained to accommodate a child's special needs when possible, rather than moving the child.

If it appears that a child's placement may be in jeopardy, the SOC is accessed immediately if Agency staff and foster parent interventions do not seem to be working. SOC recommendations are then incorporated into the children's plan. If there appears to be a more complex problem concerning a child's ability to reside in a foster home setting other options are explored with the foster family and the Agency. A recommendation to increase a child's level of care through the Child and Youth Investment Team (CAYIT) meetings may be determined with the foster parent and the team to determine if a child is appropriate for a group home setting. This of course is the last resort for any child that is residing in a foster home environment.

If *ChildServ* does need to move a child, we issue a written Notice of Decision, unless risk of harm is imminent. *ChildServ* will always give notice of rights to a service appeal. When a foster parent issues a written Notice of Decision for the removal of a child, and SOC and other intercessions have been unsuccessful, and it is clear that a child cannot be removed within the 30 days, the foster parent must be notified in writing at least four days before the 30 day deadline. A staffing is also held with the foster parent within 7-14 days after the Notice of Decision is provided to the agency and/or foster parent. The purpose of this staffing is to have a planful move for this child to be placed in the least restrictive setting with the foster parent support and understanding. A monitoring plan will also be instituted in the home for the client and the foster parent while the child remains in placement until an appropriate solution is made. The plan will be monitored weekly by the worker in support of the foster parent.

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

concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.

All *ChildServ* Licensing Staff are trained in the rights of foster parents during their orientation and on-going staff meetings. The staff is trained during regular department meetings. The Agency also sponsors at least yearly trainings on Licensing Standards (Rule 402), The Appeals Process, and on Legal Issues in Foster Care, affording all staff and foster parents the opportunity to understand foster parents' rights when there is an investigation. Foster Parents are provided a Yearly Training Schedule. The licensing workers also review Rule 402 with licensed families every six months in their homes while conducting compliance/monitoring visits. The attached Licensing Concern Form which *ChildServ* casework staff use to initiate internal investigations, has a place where staff must specify which particular licensing standards they suspect have been violated. Staff is trained at least semi-annually on the use of the forms.

Licensing staff, at the last monitoring visit prior to recommending the issuance of a license, are required to walk a foster parent orally through the rights of the foster parent in the event of an investigation. The appeals process is also covered and the DCFS brochure concerning investigations and appeals is left with them. Any current foster parents who indicate they have not yet received one will receive the DCFS brochure by mail.

When a foster parent obtains a license or transfers their license to *ChildServ* they are given a packet which includes a statement that they have reviewed those policies and understand procedures explained to them which they initial in the acknowledgment.

At the time of an investigation, foster parents are given a copy of *ChildServ's Acknowledgement of Complaint Investigation* and Declaration of Rights form, which is attached. Foster parents who are the subject of an investigation are told of their right to have an advocate present when the investigator informs them of the alleged violations and arranges the first meeting. The 30-day timeframe goal to complete an investigation is explained at that time. If they wish to have an advocate present, they are then asked to sign the Acknowledgement of Appearance form, also attached. They are told they have the right to appeal a decision against them through *ChildServ's* internal appeal/grievance process, as well as their right to appeal through DCFS without retaliation or undue influence from *ChildServ*. A copy of *ChildServ's* Internal Appeal/Grievance Policy (attached) is given to foster parents at the first meeting initiating a Complaint Investigation. The Appeal/Grievance Policy is available in Spanish and English.

The right to appeal by foster parents applies also to any negative results with which they disagree or corrective action plan developed as the result of an investigation. They are informed in writing of this right when given a corrective action plan or informed of negative results from an investigation. *ChildServ's* new grievance and appeal form (attached) specifies this is one of the appealable actions of the Agency. Foster parents are informed of investigation outcomes in writing, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated and impact, if any, on their licensing status.

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

It is the practice of *ChildServ* to inform Foster families of all known information concerning any child that may be placed in their care. *ChildServ* believes this will assist the Foster home and the Agency in determining the appropriateness of the home.

The Foster Parent Placement Agreement will list all known behaviors of the foster child. The case managers will work with foster parents to decide which behaviors should be reported to schools and the community at large.

ChildServ also provides each foster parent with a child record folder for each child that is placed in their care. The folder consists of forms and child specific information such as medical, school, physical and personal maintenance, service planning, important numbers/emergency numbers, and pertinent information for the foster parent such as advocacy office information, *ChildServ*'s grievance process, appeal process, Office of Inspector General and other important information.

All casework staff are trained initially on *ChildServ*'s policy that all relevant information on a child is shared before and after placement. The importance of providing all client information is stressed to all caseworkers during their orientation to the agency in conjunction with training on IEPA (Inter Ethnic Placement Agreement) and the use of client Matching Tools in determining appropriate placements for children. As new information is generated, it too is shared. Staffs are held accountable through *ChildServ*'s Foster Care Case Supervision Form and Foster Care File Check List, which documents staff's activities on behalf of clients. Foster parents are encouraged to inform supervisors whenever they suspect that they have been misinformed or under informed about a child's behaviors or history. *ChildServ* case workers are also orientated to *ChildServ*'s information on Placement and the Foster parent Implementation plan at quarterly all staff meetings.

ChildServ recognizes that foster parents who care for special needs children require clinical knowledge and background information necessary to meet the client's developmental needs. Foster parents are given written information on diagnosis and medication in easy to understand terms to help prepare them for the special needs child. These documents may include diagnostic symptoms, causal factors, diagnostic methods and clinical treatment methods. If a child is prescribed medication, detailed information on the prescription dosage, side effects, and general use are provided. Foster parents who care for children in our Project 90 and Teen Mom programs also receive ongoing training and supervision regarding diagnostic and medication issues. Foster parents and staff are trained on the agency medication policy, including those children that are under the medication supervision of Dr. Glazer, *ChildServ*'s contracted Psychiatrist.

8. The right to be notified of scheduled meeting and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other

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.

At present DCFS notifies foster parents by mail about pertinent Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs). As a back up to this DCFS notification, *ChildServ* case managers call foster parents to ensure they have been notified and encourage them to attend. As additional back up, *ChildServ* will also notify foster parents by mail of events to which they should be invited. Staffings and visits are arranged by the *ChildServ* case manager and every effort is made to accommodate the caretaker's schedule. Supervisors require case managers to get signed acknowledgements from foster parents that they were notified of scheduled meetings. Foster parents are notified of ACR's through the Home Verification form and Child and Family Team Meeting form (return home cases only).

The agency Educational Liaison trains foster parents on educational advocacy twice per year. The agenda includes information on Healthworks, IEP support and referral sources.

Therapists hold quarterly staffings on the individual treatment plans for each client receiving therapy. The therapist contacts the foster parent by telephone and mail to ensure they are informed of the staffing dates and times. In the event that formal staffings cannot be arranged to accommodate the caretaker's schedule, the case manager or clinical therapist will review the client service plan with the foster parent during the monthly home visit. A copy is provided to the foster parent.

Case managers consult with the caretakers prior to establishing permanency goals and the subsequent development of service plans or clinical treatment plans. Case managers and foster parents work together to assess current functioning of the client, outline strengths and deficits, and explore service options. A plan is then developed encompassing the needs of both children and their foster families. A copy is provided to the foster parent and evidence of foster parent involvement is documented in case notes, Foster Care Case Supervision forms and by foster parent signature on Treatment Plans for all clients involved in therapeutic services.

Case managers are required to provide notification to their respective supervisors of all Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) and court hearings. They are required to complete an internal Court Documentation Form for submission to the supervisor, and are expected to review the information that is not confidential with the foster parent. Letters may be sent to the foster parents alerting them to the scheduled event and informing them of their right to be heard.

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

It is the practice of *ChildServ* to ensure prospective foster parents are informed of a child's specific needs that address the direct care of a child in placement.

At the time of intake, the case manager and/or intake coordinator informs the foster parent of any information that is available regarding the child, which is applicable to their care and needs. Information regarding the child's family is limited to that information essential for understanding the needs of the child and participation in the treatment team. The methodology for sharing information includes disclosure of known behavior issues on the Placement Agreement form, inclusion of foster parents in service planning and ACR's. The case manager also updates foster parents regularly during scheduled visits to the home. *ChildServ*'s placement agreement indicates that as new information becomes available, *ChildServ* staff and foster parents will mutually share that information.

Foster parents who accept children with special needs on a non-emergency basis are invited to attend a pre-placement clinical staffing. The case manager, supervisor, the clinical therapist, and other professionals as needed are available to provide in depth information and treatment goals reflecting the child's psychological, educational, or medical needs.

The case manager and the foster parent sign the Placement Agreement. The supervisor also must sign it to ensure that all known relevant information about the child has been shared with the foster parent.

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

It is *ChildServ*'s practice to ensure Foster parents are a part of the team when it comes to placement decisions concerning a child they are caring for. The purpose is to eliminate break down in communication and unplanned moves.

In case of a planned termination of placement, the case manager or supervisor notifies the caretaker, in person or by telephone, of the placement decision and rationale behind it within 24 hours of the decision being made. In addition, a 14-day written notice is provided by certified mail and in person. The letter includes a copy of the publication "Your Right to Appeal" which outlines procedures for case review by the Administrative Law Judge. Licensing staff is also available to work with caretakers who wish to exercise the appeals option. The exception to the Notice of Decision provision would be if it were not in the children's best interest, as determined by supervisory and/or director or above approval, or in the case of an emergency move. In any case, sufficient, if not timely, notice will be given in all cases.

11. The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearing, and the court docket number of the case; and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.

Foster parents are provided with training (both pre-service and on going) which outlines Juvenile Court procedures. Their roles, responsibilities, and rights as specified by the Juvenile Courts Act are reviewed with them at that time. Our training includes representatives from either the Public Guardian's Office or DCFS Legal who are qualified to provide a thorough explanation of the process. The Agency attorney may also provide training in these areas to foster parents.

In addition to written notice provided by DCFS, case managers keep foster parents informed of upcoming court hearings through home visits, telephone contact and mail. Specific and detailed information is also given including dates, times, docket numbers and the motion being heard in order to help facilitate foster parent attendance and participation and emphasize their right to be heard. *ChildServ* supervisors and/or directors attend juvenile court meetings with DCFS as well as the chief presiding judge. Supervisors and Directors receive e-mail "ticklers" with court information from DCFS legal and these are forwarded to the appropriate workers to ensure that all caseworkers are apprised of court dates and have undertaken appropriate planning including inclusion of foster parents in court preparations. Supervisors regularly ensure that staff are being held accountable through regular supervision meetings and the Foster Care Case Supervision Form.

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

It is *ChildServ*'s practice and commitment to previous foster homes to provide them the opportunity to have a child placed back in their care upon re entering the system. The purpose of this is to provide continued care and attentiveness to the best interest of the child.

Foster parents have the right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child formerly placed with the foster parent(s) re-enters foster care. Returning children are identified through *ChildServ*'s database system, which tracks open and closed cases. The Agency has software, called EVOLV, which has the child's entire placement history on one screen and computer networking makes this data accessible from any *ChildServ* office. *ChildServ*'s intake coordinator is the central person for reviewing this information before placement and for beginning consideration of with whom the child should be placed. If it is known that the child was previously with the Agency the intake coordinator pulls together the information for placement director's consideration. When a child re-enters the system the responsible Director will meet with the appropriate staff to determine if any prior foster home meets the child's current needs, their best interest as well as the best interest of the children currently in the home. Matching of the child to the previous home follows all IEPA standards including use of Caregiver Matching Tool which requires active involvement of the previous foster parent in determining the best interest of the child.

13. The right to have timely access to the child placement agency's existing appeals process and the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to appeal.

All foster parents licensed through *ChildServ* attend Pride Training, where they receive information on the DCFS appeal system. Also, *ChildServ* developed an internal appeal/grievance procedure. This procedure has been approved by the Council on Accreditation and the Child Welfare League. Once a year, *ChildServ* provides training for foster parents on both appeals processes. *ChildServ* foster parents receive the appeal brochure in the mail every January. When new foster parents are licensed through out the year staff distribute copies upon licensure of the new foster home.

ChildServ's Internal Appeal/Grievance Policy states that the foster parent's right to exercise their appeal-rights will not result in any retaliation from the Agency. *ChildServ's* Quality Improvement Department, as an independent body, will review each grievance and interview the parties involved to ensure retaliation is not taken against the foster parents. The foster parents are informed of this right when the appeal/grievance procedure is explained to them. (See attached).

ChildServ's mission is to help children and their families build better lives. *ChildServ* accomplishes this mission through high quality service delivery to the children and families served.

If, at any time, the foster parent is dissatisfied with the decisions made about the services that the foster parent receives from *ChildServ* (and the concerns were not adequately addressed with the Worker, Supervisor, and the Director), the foster parent may voice concerns through *ChildServ's* Appeal/Grievance process. The foster parent may file an appeal/grievance in writing or verbally if writing is difficult for the foster parent. A *ChildServ* staff member will assist the foster parent if needed. The foster parent may request the appeal process to be conducted in their primary language.

Prior to filing an Appeal/Grievance, the following steps must be taken:

- ❖ Meet with the Worker to discuss the concerns. If the situation is not resolved to the foster parent's satisfaction;
- ❖ Meet with the Supervisor to discuss the concerns. If the situation is not resolved to the foster parent's satisfaction;
- ❖ Meet with the Program Director to discuss the concerns. If the situation is not resolved to satisfaction the foster parent may file an Appeal/Grievance.

All discussions regarding attempts at resolution of the concerns will be documented on a case note entry and placed in the file. If the concerns were not addressed to the foster parent's satisfaction through the Worker, Supervisor, and Director they can file an Appeal/Grievance. An additional copy of this policy will be provided to the foster parent. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) also has a separate Appeal/Grievance process that the foster parent can utilize. *ChildServ* will provide the foster parent with the DCFS policy at the same time that they receive the *ChildServ* policy.

In order to file an Appeal/Grievance, the following must occur:

- ❖ This action must be taken within ten (10) working days of the date that the decision or action was decided.
- ❖ The foster Parent must document in writing the nature of the problem (why they are dissatisfied) and what the foster parent would like to see happen in the situation. The

foster parent must mail the Appeal/Grievance to: *ChildServ*, Vice President of Programs, 8765 West Higgins Road, Suite 450, Chicago, Illinois, 60631.

- ❖ The Vice President of Programs will acknowledge that the Appeal/Grievance has been received. The foster parent will be notified in writing.
- ❖ The Vice President of Programs will notify the President/CEO of the appeal/grievance in writing (on the “Internal Service Appeal Request” form) and attach the written appeal/grievance.

The process:

- ❖ In most cases, a hearing will be scheduled within ten (10) working days after the request is received. Any planned agency decision in the case (unless it is of an emergency nature) will not be made until after the hearing.
- ❖ The Appeal/Grievance will be heard by a panel of at least two (2) people appointed by the President/CEO of *ChildServ*. The Panel will be made up of at least one (1) person from the Administrative level who is not from the same department that the Appeal/Grievance is from.
- ❖ The Panel will receive a copy of the completed Internal Service Appeal form.
- ❖ The Panel will receive a written report from the staff involved. The report will contain (at the minimum): basic case information and details of the decision or action being appealed.
- ❖ The foster parent will in general represent themselves but can have a spokesperson or attorney attend if they wish.
- ❖ The foster parent can withdraw an Appeal/Grievance at any time during this process.

The Panel will then send a report with a recommendation to the President within ten (10) working days after the Hearing. The foster parent will be notified of the President’s final decision by certified mail within twenty (20) working days of the President’s receipt of the final report from the Panel.

Dated copies of *ChildServ*’s written letter acknowledging the Appeal/Grievance, the Panel’s final report, and the President’s response to the Appeal/Grievance are sent to:

- ❖ The Vice President of Programs
- ❖ The Foster Parent record
- ❖ The Director of Quality Improvement

Appeal through DCFS

In the case that an Appeal/Grievance is filed through DCFS, the nature and outcome of the Appeal/Grievance will be documented in the case record. All documentation will be on the “Service Appeal request to IDCFS” form. A copy of the documentation will also be sent to The Director of Quality Improvement.

Reporting of *ChildServ* Appeal/Grievances

- ❖ A record of Appeals/Grievances and other related documents are reviewed and reported on a quarterly basis by The Director of Quality Improvement.
- ❖ The report generated by The Director of Quality Improvement will then be distributed to agency administrators.
- ❖ *ChildServ*’s President/CEO will report on the pattern of service appeals/grievances to *ChildServ*’s Board.

Program Specific (Adoption)

- ❖ ChildServ shall initiate an investigation of complaints received within 2 business days;
- ❖ Shall maintain written documentation of all complaints received by the agency;
- ❖ Shall report the outcome of its complaint investigation in writing to Departments Regional Licensing office or DCFS licensing representative within 10 business days after complaints are received;
- ❖ Retaliation against the person making the complaint is prohibited;
- ❖ A member of management level staff shall be designated to accept consumer complaints; and
- ❖ Resolutions of all complaints shall be reported to the agency board of directors at its next meeting

Client rights:

- ❖ The agency's policy and procedures shall be provided in writing prospective clients, including biological parents, adoptive parents and adoptees that it has served, at the earliest time possible, and, in the case of biological and adoptive parents, prior to placement or prior to entering into any written contract with the clients
- ❖ Receipt of a copy of the agency's policy and procedure shall be signed and dated by the client and witnessed, and a copy shall be maintained in the client's file.

ChildServ's Quality Improvement Department has revised ChildServ Internal Appeal/Grievance procedure to be inclusive of any form of complaint related to services of fair treatment. The Foster parents are informed that any suspected violations of The Plan can be grieved through the ChildServ appeals/grievance process. 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. For example, it cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse and/or neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.

14. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under Section 35.6 of the Children and Family Services Act and all of the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act [20 ILCS 520/ 1-15]

Brochures on the Office of the Inspector General are publicly available at all offices conducting foster care provided sufficient supplies are available for distribution. Training is also offered annually to foster parents on internal and external appeals process including information on how to contact the office of The Inspector General. The position of Inspector General was established in 1993 to help improve the child welfare system and to rejuvenate DCFS employees, foster parents, private agencies, foster children and their biological families. The Office of the Inspector General investigates complaints that they receive that involve child welfare services. The phone number for The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is 312-433-3000. The phone number for the DCFS Advocacy Office is 1-800-232-3798. Foster Parents are

encouraged to use the “chain of command” and the agency’s appeal/grievance procedure prior to contacting the Advocacy Office or the OIG.

RESPONSIBILITIES

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

Communication between Agency personnel and foster parents is critical to successful placement of children. *ChildServ* establishes and exemplifies high standards for open communication beginning with our information and orientation meetings. Our licensing and case management staff provide a thorough overview of roles and responsibilities of foster parenting. Throughout the orientation process appropriate communication is emphasized. We use case examples of how good communication contributes to successful outcomes for children throughout the information process.

As stated before, all families seeking an initial license are sent to Pride Training.

The attached Placement Agreement is used to explicitly state expectations of foster parents and to list problem behaviors of children to be placed. As part of that agreement, foster parents will share information on newly observed behaviors. They sign an agreement to perform that task.

At *ChildServ*’s Information/Orientation Meetings for Prospective New Foster and Adoptive Parents the DCFS requirement that licensed foster parents need at least sixteen hours of training to be re-licensed is thoroughly discussed, including *ChildServ*’s monthly training opportunities. Our six-month foster home license monitoring form has a section assessing the foster parents’ participation in training. This allows for early identification and remediation of training needs issues.

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

Foster parents understand and accept that all personal or identifying information concerning the foster child, including, but not limited to his/her background, his/her family, and the identity and location of all other persons or families with whom he/she has been or will be placed, shall be treated as confidential. Please see attached Placement Agreement which foster parents are expected to sign. In the Placement Agreement foster parents sign their agreement to maintain confidential critical case information.

ChildServ provides two additional methods of clarifying and informing parents of their responsibilities related to confidentiality. At least once a year we share through newsletters the rule regarding confidentiality. This material is made user friendly and includes case examples to clarify concepts. We also provide a formal training yearly. Through both methods we make available the Confidentiality Act..

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

It is the practice of *ChildServ* to ensure foster parents are trained and informed about the state guidelines in the area of educational provisions. The purpose of this is to empower the foster parent to properly advocate for children placed in their care.

Educational Advocacy is a required component of all licensed foster parents training. The Agency employs an Educational Liaison whose responsibilities involve educational advocacy and tracking on behalf of children. They help the foster parent to be accountable as well as assisting them with school related issues.

It is the foster parent responsibility to be fully informed about the services available in or through a child's school, Understanding a child's special needs, Knowing a child's rights, Participating in meetings to determine eligibility and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. It is the foster parent's right to ask questions and voice concerns when unsure of terms, language, the appropriateness of a child's program, the schools recommendations , etc.

It is also a caseworker's responsibility to provide foster parents and or /schools with the following enrollment documentation in order to facilitate enrollment and ensure schools are aware of the educational/developmental services a child may currently need as well as services that were in place in a previous district.

The "Educational Advocacy" training is offered quarterly per year at *ChildServ*'s monthly trainings. "Legal Issues in Foster Care" training will be offered annually. This training is usually offered by DCFS legal department . Service appeal information will be provided to foster parents through annual training and brochures. A copy of this plan with *ChildServ*'s Appeal/Grievance Procedures as an attachment is mailed to all foster parents. Foster parents are notified in advance by telephone and mail of client related staffings, ACR's, Placement Reviews, Case Conferences, IEP meetings and Court hearings.

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

The foundations of mental health and well being of a children placed in foster care must be rooted in dignity, respect, and consideration. *ChildServ* establishes and maintains high standards for the treatment of children and trains foster parents on these ideals beginning in orientation meetings through to our monthly training events. *ChildServ* also offers training on cultural sensitivity, which emphasizes this issue. Foster parents have the ability to provide feedback on training needs and concerns.

Case managers are responsible to monitor children in placement and families are treated with dignity and respect through regular home visits, individual interviews with clients and consultation with the child's school. Feedback is also gathered through *ChildServ*'s Foster Parent Advisory Council. Each *ChildServ* department also maintains a Quality Improvement Team to address identified issues and implement plans for improvement.

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 parent's own support needs and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.

The foster care licensing and case management team members take on a variety of roles to assess the strengths, challenges, and limitations of our foster parents. This

assessment begins at orientation meetings as we challenge parents to examine their motivations, appraise bias, and examine parenting skills. The licensing representatives conduct a further assessment at their initial home visits. The Licensing Monitoring Form provides an opportunity to ask more formal questions on strengths and limitations, and this is used to make our determinations regarding licensure, placement, and training needs. The case manager and case aides who have regular interactions with foster parents take an active role in assessing skills and use supervision to discuss and make recommendations to ensure foster parents are able to provide care to our children. Supports through respite, transportation, and training are offered when the dynamics of good care may be in jeopardy or appear needed. In some cases, a foster parent's own physical condition may be deteriorating requiring the Agency to seek additional assessment or supports. *ChildServ* makes every effort to provide the level of support necessary to maintain placements.

ChildServ's Quality of Care Statement is attached. The licensing representative executes this instrument when the information is needed for assessment purposes. At six-month monitoring we review the foster parent strengths and weaknesses and recommend areas of improvement as well as progress.

Our placement availability list contains a comment section that specifically spells out the foster parent strengths. This information is gathered from the foster parents, case managers, and licensing staff. Foster parents are encouraged and supported toward taking special needs children. *ChildServ* now has available and uses the DCFS Child Caregiver Matching Tool as another means of mutually assessing foster parent strengths.

ChildServ's Training and Quality Improvement Departments have adopted a Training Evaluation for the purposes of assessment of the training content and its usefulness to foster parents. Foster parents are also given the opportunity to give suggestions for additional training.

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.

It is *ChildServ's* practice and commitment to ensure Foster parents are aware of the various support groups that assists them in their ongoing support of children and families.

ChildServ promotes a multifaceted approach to encouraging our foster parents to network with other foster parents and organizations.

Our Agency presently utilizes the FPAC to develop and implement networking opportunities for our Agency care takers. In addition, a foster parent newsletter is circulated on a quarterly basis to inform foster parents on up-coming events. Conferences, training opportunities, adoption information and special events promoted by DCFS, foster parent associations, and other entities are listed. In addition, *ChildServ* encourages and sponsors foster parent attendance at DCFS promoted foster parent events. This will continue under the present plan.

ChildServ will provide linkage between its FPAC and the DCFS statewide group to tap their expertise and organizational savvy.

ChildServ's Grandparent Support Program provides special networking and affiliating opportunities for its foster parents who foster their own grandchildren. This service may be expanded to accommodate foster parents from other agencies as well.

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

ChildServ's Training Department uses a Training Evaluation to assess the training content and its usefulness to foster parents. Foster Parents are given the opportunity to give suggestions for additional training. The case management team conducts staffings with foster parents when a training deficit is identified. Corrective action plans are developed to address the individual training needs. Information on the PRIDE Modules is provided to all foster parents on a general basis and additionally when an individual training need is identified.

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

It is the practice of *ChildServ* to offer a planned transition when moving a child to a new home due to foster home disruption or transfer. The purpose of this is to minimize the negative impact of placement disruption of children, to ensure that children are placed in a safe, stable and nurturing environment.

It is our goal to maintain and stabilize children in placement and to implement prevention strategies, whenever a change in placement is suspected or threatened. *ChildServ* begins the process of placement stabilization by providing foster parents with training to work with challenging children. Specialized training is also offered to all our foster parents, and is conditional for our foster parents who care for children in our Project 90 and Teen Mom programs. Specialized training includes: SACY, Behavior Management, Clinical Diagnosis and intervention, the medically complex, as well as other training issues. Once foster parents are trained and prepared for their roles as foster family caregivers, the Agency makes every effort to match families via the Child Caregiver Matching Tool.

Whenever there is a threat of a placement disruption, which does not include situations of imminent risk or harm, *ChildServ* will contact SOC and facilitate a family meeting with the therapist, case manager, licensing representative and supervisor, at the foster parent's home, in an effort to stabilize and address the situation threatening the placement disruption. *ChildServ* will also put a plan in place to address the crisis. *ChildServ* also increases visits to the foster home, to monitor the plan put in place to address the crisis. Additional services, such as a referral to Systems of Care (SOC), Respite services, Clinical staffing, 24 hours access to staff and emergency telephone numbers including, *ChildServ*'s after hours emergency pager number, as well as telephone numbers to SASS and SOC providers (800/345-9049). Throughout the child's placement, on-going assessments, interventions, and referrals for services are also provided by the case manager to insure the health and well being

of the children and their families. Case supervision is also utilized to identify, at an early stage, possible placement disruption. The Foster Care Case Supervision Form has been revised to clearly identify those cases where a worker and supervisor may feel that a placement is at risk of disruption.

If the prevention strategies put in place do not result in the stabilization of the placement and a change in placement is inevitable, *ChildServ* will facilitate a planful move, with the cooperation of the foster parent(s), to assist the children in this transition. The Agency will also secure all required placement change documentation (i.e. Notice of Decision), prior to a change in placement. Only parent's whose rights have not been terminated via the courts, will be notified of any changes in their child's placement.

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.

ChildServ provides training a minimum of once per year on Stress Management. Respite services are available to the foster parent in case of a family emergency or to assist in stabilization of the placement. Foster parents who wish to put their home on hold for placement are registered in the foster parent information system (EVOLV) as such. We also notify the DCFS Placement Clearance Desk when necessary. Foster parents are provided information and opportunities to participate in support groups and the *ChildServ* FPAC. Foster parents can access counseling services through the Agency or be referred to another for service. All members of the case management team are responsible for assessing the stress of foster parents and ensure that services are made available to assist families when needed.

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.

ChildServ's brochure on Licensing and Adoption Process presents both programs as a rewarding experience. It is uplifting with many images of smiling children and parents. *ChildServ* has also honored individual foster parents and their achievements on the *ChildServ* web site.

ChildServ believes that among the best methods of promoting foster care as well as recruitment of new foster parents is word of mouth by foster parents themselves. *ChildServ* works diligently to retain foster parents and provides them with the information and support to encourage others to provide foster care. To this end *ChildServ* will continue its program of offering a cash incentive to foster and adoptive parents that recruit others who become licensed foster parents and accept a child into placement.

In addition, *ChildServ* staffs are using the information from Department surveys on foster home utilization to assist us with placement and recruitment planning.

ChildServ also provides assistance to willing foster parents in preparations to promote foster care within their local church and community groups and support their desires to promote foster care.

We celebrate our parents with a special dinner in May in conjunction with national Foster Parent Appreciation Month. This annual dinner demonstrates *ChildServ's* appreciation for our foster parents and allows an opportunity to present awards and recognition.

ChildServ, through its FPAC, will continue to identify additional strategies for positive public relations. Foster parents are an integral part of *ChildServ's* foster parent recruitment team. Foster parents are provided with information to share with prospective foster parents, community, religious and civic groups. All foster parents receive regular newsletters from the state and from the agency on statewide foster care issues and events for their participation and are invited to participate as co-trainers of foster parents alongside *ChildServ* staff. *ChildServ* also promotes the support of foster parents through encouraging members of the FPAC to mention and welcome new foster parents. Foster parent news is also often prominent in *ChildServ's* internal newsletter.

ChildServ will continue to announce the availability of its Plan to the public as another means of positively promoting foster care. *ChildServ* is quite proud of this plan and welcomes public scrutiny and accountability. The Plan is now posted on *ChildServ's* web site (www.ChildServ.org) under the Legal Section.

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

The Foster/Adopt Pride pre-service training and other Foster Parent trainings outline the roles and responsibilities of each member of the professional team. *ChildServ's* Foster Parent Advisory Council plays an additional role by providing feedback to management staff who can then work to incorporate their feedback into training and supervision of the team when indicated.

It is the mission of the FPAC to govern the agency's foster parent implementation plan, its objectives and goals, thus ensuring that foster parents are a part of the team and a voice in planning within the agency.

In addition, annually, *ChildServ's* Directors of Foster Care, and the Case manager Supervisors meet with foster parents to provide clarity regarding *ChildServ's* expectations of our working relationship and to discuss ways to enhance the partnership between *ChildServ* and the professional team. It is a goal of FPAC to make the entire group of foster parents more efficient and effective in serving foster children and their families.

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

As part of the initial home study and evaluation process, the licensing team reviews with foster parents the provision of “The Abused and Neglected Child Act” that specifies their status as mandated reporters and their role in assuring occurrences involving abuse, neglect and sexually aggressive and/or problematic behaviors are reported immediately to *ChildServ* staff. Documentation for the file includes the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form, which all caretakers’ sign. In addition, foster parents receive a reminder during the yearly training session held on Licensing Standards. This training is part of our ongoing foster parent training curriculum wherein foster parents are educated on their responsibility as mandated reporters. The training provides information for foster parents on what to expect when allegations are made as well as the rules and regulations governing such allegations. Violations of the Mandated Reporter Status are subject to a Complaint Investigation by *ChildServ* and are not tolerated.

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 those proceedings.

ChildServ offers training to foster parents on Administrative Case Reviews (ACR’s) and Client Service Plans through our on-going training curriculum. The training emphasizes the role of foster parents as part of the child welfare team and stresses the importance of their input. Foster parents are encouraged to attend ACR’s and included in developing the Service Plan. Foster Parents are encouraged to participate as part of a treatment team and are asked to provide input in the planning for the child’s permanency goal through participation in court hearings as well as ACR’s.

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

ChildServ offers foster parents training at least once per year on the appeals process and foster parents right concerning appeals. Both our own internal procedure as well as the DCFS appeal system is covered in the training. Brochures and information are made available on-site as needed and mailed out at least once per year.

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

During the initial licensing process foster parents are informed of the need to keep accurate and complete records for each child in areas including Medical/Dental records, Health Passport, school records, overnight visits, visits with biological family, out of state travel, Unusual Incidents (accidents, injuries, behavior problems), and receipts for expenditures related to the child (e.g. clothing, toys, school and recreational fees, etc.). Foster parents are provided with a client record folder that is kept in the foster home and is accessible to the case manager to review during the monthly visits. Folders and binders for storage will be provided for each child through *ChildServ*.

The monthly *Foster Parent Bulletin* specifically addresses at least one policy/procedure every month such as money issues and placement disruption. Caseworkers, supervisors, and foster parents are encouraged to submit ideas for information to be shared in this format.

During the annual procedures training, which is presented to all foster care sites on different days to maximize participation opportunities for foster parents, foster parents are encouraged to keep receipts for expenditures for foster children. It is explained that it provides documentation that purchases on behalf of the children are being made by the foster parent, consistently and appropriately, as per Licensing Standards. *ChildServ* requires that foster parents maintain records (as applicable to their foster child) for each of the following areas:

1. Medication

a.) The physician informs clients and foster parents about any prescribed medication and its potential side effects. Both parties must sign that they are informed.

b) All clients on medication are monitored by the DCFS Medication Log. Foster parents complete the log provided in the child record folder and workers pick up and review logs monthly.

2. Behavior

Foster parents are expected to keep workers informed of any behavior issues in the home, school, or community. They are encouraged to do this via monthly home visits and telephone contacts, and not to wait until behavior escalates to make a report. The DCFS Behavior Log is to be reviewed with the worker monthly, and is provided in the child record folder.

3. Unusual Incidents

All unusual incidents should be immediately reported to the case manager. The child record folder contains a sample of the form for foster parents to reference regarding the definition of “unusual incident”. The case manager will fill out the state prescribed Unusual Incident form and submit it to the supervisor and Program Director. A copy is also submitted to the Director of Quality Improvement.

4. Physical and Dental

Foster parents will make appointments as required for physical examination (all children), dental examination (ages two and up), vision and hearing for all foster children in their care and secure any other professional services as needed or referred. The DCFS forms must be completed by the professional providing the services.

5. Receipts for Allowance and Clothing

ChildServ asks foster parent to keep copies of receipts for clothing, allowances, and any other direct expenditures for the child. Information regarding the required DCFS amounts is provided, and a disbursement form is available for use.

6. School Absences

All foster parents are asked to report every known absence from school to their caseworker the day of its occurrence. All suspensions and detentions should also be reported.

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

During pre-placement visits staff will share all relevant information with potential foster parents for their review. *ChildServ* will also ensure that each foster parent has a child record folder that provides relevant information regarding children placed in their care. If we have insufficient data, *ChildServ* will continue to advocate for additional records, which, as they become available, will be shared as appropriate. All agency case managers are trained on the importance of information sharing during their initial orientation to the agency. This is stressed during training on use of the Caregiver Matching Tool as well as ongoing caseworker training

Foster parents will assist in the transition of the child into a new home by providing information related to the care of the child. The case manager trains the foster parent on the appropriate means as well as the importance of maintaining an up to date child record folder on the child in care.

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 maintaining a child's cultural identity when the race or culture of the foster family differs from that of the foster child; and the responsibility to take action to address these issues.

ChildServ provides cultural sensitivity using a two hour version of our six hour curriculum titled, "Diversity Forum". This training is offered to foster parents on a yearly basis to be held at a minimum of two sites per year. *ChildServ* uses a co-trainer model and invites a foster parent with skills in this area to join the co-training team for the purposes of foster parent training. The content areas covered in the Diversity Forum are well designed to address the responsibilities of foster parents to uphold culturally sensitive attitudes and behaviors. Additional resources are made available to foster parents through publication of our training opportunities, and as needed to address specific training needs in this topic area.

End of Year 2007 Plan