



Creating *hope*. Changing *lives*. Challenging *all limits*.

Little City's

Center for Family and Community Based Services

Foster Care and Adoption Program

2023 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

PURPOSE:

- This booklet is a resource for you
- Outlines mutual Rights and Responsibilities
- Developed from IL Foster Parent Law, Rule 340

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, or SUGGESTIONS?

- Contact Katherine Oglesby:
(773) 916-4091 or koglesby@littlecity.org

2023 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
Rule 340
FOSTER PARENT CODE

LITTLE CITY

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Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan 2023 Annual Report

Little City Foundation (LCF) received a rating of “Acceptable” for our 2022 Foster Parent Implementation Plan. Little City was pleased with the strengths of the plan as noted by the Advisory Council.

Little City had a very busy and fruitful 2022. We took the lessons learned throughout the pandemic to continue to adapt our programs and services to better meet the needs of our youth, families, and staff. Some of the permanent changes we have made as a program include providing a fully hybrid work from home/work in office schedule for all program employees that allows them the flexibility to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently while also maintaining a good work/life balance. This element of our program was highly successful in our staff recruitment and retention, coupled with the pay raises we were able to provide aligned with additional financial support from the Department. We continued providing virtual operations primarily to deliver over 200 hours of training to foster parents. We also have been able to respond more swiftly and engage prospective foster parents by hosting 1:1 and monthly group virtual information sessions. Support provided to youth and families served in the program by all departments (administration; intake and recruitment; licensing and training; case management; and clinical (mental health and behavioral/applied behavioral analysis ABA) was provided primarily in-person; however, virtual platforms were used when necessary to provide immediate safety assessments/interventions, support, crisis response, and stabilization services. Little City Foster Care and Adoption Program (LCF FCAD) also utilized virtual platforms to engage families in recruitment activities such as hosting Foster Parent Roundtables featuring our current foster parents as the expert panelists answering questions of prospective foster parents eager to learn more about how to become engaged and help. These events were received very well by both current and prospective families. Towards the latter part of the year, we transitioned most recruitment activities to in-person. We successfully hosted an alternative Spring Break skating and bowling event, a Foster Parent Appreciation Brunch, an Annual Picnic, and an annual holiday gift drive with daily virtual events for all program participants (youth, foster parents, biological families, and staff.)

Little City Foster Care and Adoption Program also expanded our program’s reach and ability to make an impact to vulnerable families in need by acquiring 125 youth and family cases and requisite home of relative (HMR) and licensed foster parent licenses from what was formerly Aunt Martha’s Foster Care Program. From January to June 2022, Little City Foster Care & Adoption Program admitted 125 youth and their families, doubled in staffing size, and expanded our footprint to include two more offices in addition to our Chicago location in Matteson and Joliet. With this acquisition, Little City expanded to serve traditional and specialized youth with mild to severe needs between the ages of 0-21 in the care of Illinois’ Department of Children and Family Services’ child welfare system/foster care who reside across seven counties. Little City Foster Care and Adoption Program primarily provides services in Cook Central, Cook South, and Northern Region/Will Counties.

As we all continue to make our way through the Pandemic, Little City continues to thrive. The additional cases has allowed Little City to expand our case work staff as well to meet the demands placed on the agency. We have continued to expand our training to provide on-demand training for our foster parents. Additionally, the

Foster Care Program has continued to increase engagement in virtual foster parent orientation, training and events in response to the pandemic – all of which have continued to be well-received and attended. Our virtual engagement of prospective foster parents has resulted in quicker engagement of prospective foster families into the licensing process, expediting the timeline to licensure and ultimately our capacity to serve youth in need in care. Little City continues to engage our families in recruitment and retention activities as referenced throughout our FIP. We continue to work on our expansion of our foster care and adoption program services in Lake County, with our administrative services being housed in Waukegan. Recruitment of foster parents is ongoing, with an anticipated ability to serve clients in 2023.

1. Provide a general description of the process used to obtain foster parent input into your plan review/revision.

Little City's Foster Care & Adoption Program (FCAD) starts each year with providing all foster parents a copy of the Foster Parent Implementation plan. Throughout the year, all new foster parents are provided a copy of the plan upon admittance to the agency through our pre-service training and as included within our Child Files provided upon placement of a child into the home, or admission to the program. Our FIP includes a worksheet where foster parents can enter comments and feedback to return to the agency. The agency received several responses from foster parents indicating receipt of the plan, but none noted amendments needed in the plan on the forms. During this year's review and revision period, Little City held virtual meetings to get foster parent input and feedback. The foster parents' input, feedback, and discussions about their experiences with the agency were invaluable in that the foster parents continue to indicate overall satisfaction with the agency and our plan. This was also mirrored in their responses to our bi-annual satisfaction survey. However, during the meetings, comments were made about the services the LCF offers and clarity around nursing /medical services that are listed under Right #3 Support, so edits made to this year's plan to reflect their feedback and clarify this Right. All foster parents were provided with Little City's Draft 2023 Foster Parent Implementation Plan for review, input, and feedback; their comments and feedback have been incorporated into the plan's final version.

2. Summary of foster parent comments and the agency's response to those comments:

Little City received a few comments from foster parents during the review period for the 2021 FIP:

1. Right # 2 Training:

Foster Parent acknowledged use of virtual platform use as good but wanted to be able to interact with trainer's both verbally and written, for example the use of a chat feature on the platform that we use (TEAMS).

2. Right # 3 Support:

Foster Parent commented that we needed to clarify what is meant with the service provision Medical Coordination and Support.

3. Describe the way direct service staff were involved in plan development and review.

This year, staff continued to add their input into the plan respective of their program area (administrative, recruitment and intake, licensing, case management, and clinical) to ensure that we have the most up-to-date information in the plan. Intake staff helped to incorporate recruitment, engagement and retention efforts which are noted within the plan. CWS and clinical staff continue to provide monthly licensing questionnaires to the licensing team with feedback. Administrative/Management staff agreed that we update Right #2 Training, Right #4 On time financial reimbursement and Responsibility #5 Recognize your own strengths and limitations.

4. A summary of the agency’s response to public comments

Our plan is posted on our website. Little City received no public comments regarding the Foster Parent Implementation Plan.

5. A narrative describing the way foster parents are notified annually of the availability of their plan.

Little City notifies foster parents of the Foster Parent Implementation Plan availability via our website, www.littlecity.org/foster, and by email yearly. During our January monthly training, we notify and distribute the current FIP to all families. As new families come into our program, they are provided with the Foster Parent Implementation Plan as included within Child Files that are provided upon child admittance to program or family and child admittance to program when program accepts case management only or administrative transfer referrals. Families also receive a copy of a plan when participating in pre-licensure Little City pre-service foster parent implementation plan training.

6. List the needs/deficiencies identified in our 2021 plan and a description of ways revisions were incorporated in their current plan.

Little City received the following feedback regarding our 2021 FIP:

1. Please clarify how your agency works with foster parents to identify their strengths and weaknesses and how you make placements built on their strengths in Narrative #20(5).

Little City Licensing workers continue to meet with Foster Parents to discuss their strengths and limitations, during semiannual monitoring visitations as well as during training meetings. Little City licensing team interacts with families and their case management teams through internal staffing's on cases that help us to gather information that is helpful when we are discussing this area during our semiannual visitation. It is through these contacts and contexts that Little City licensing workers are able to discuss with each family their strengths and weaknesses when working with a client. It is during these types of contacts that we(licensing) help families determine the best possible placements for themselves. Pointing out how well they may have done with a particular client and that client's needs. Little City licensing along with the training committee are able to help foster parents a sense of age ranges and behavioral concerns of children identified when in larger setting of training. Acknowledging how well a Foster Parent has handled a particular client, behavior, emotional needs etc., during training, helps to build their strengths in a less intimate setting.

7. A description of how the agency’s procedures for addressing alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law, i.e.: the plan-related Grievance Procedure and how foster parents are notified that this procedure is available for their use.

Little City FCAD program developed our own form to collect Grievances as they specifically relate to the program in our 2021 plan and we will continue the policy as had been written in 2023 plan. The policy and procedure are reviewed and revised as part of the Foster Parent Advisory Committee Meetings and within on-going training on the FIP. All new foster parents are trained on the FIP, including the Grievance Procedure, in Little City’s Pre-Service Training (offered quarterly throughout the year to new and currently licensed foster parents.) Little City provides our Grievance Policy and Procedure along with the form within the Child Files provided upon the placement of a youth in a foster home. Little City’s Grievance Procedure is posted on our foster care program website www.littlecity.org/foster as is our FIP that includes the procedure as well. The Grievance procedure and FIP is posted to LCF FCAD’s online foster parent support group as well. Hard copies of the FIP are distributed every January, and throughout the year as new foster parents enter the program.

8. A list of all revised Rights narratives.

Right # 2 Training:

Foster parents have the right to be provided training - both pre-service and ongoing training - to ensure they have all the tools they need to meet the needs of children in their care, as well as their own needs.

Revised to incorporate a more conducive training schedule for our families and update specific training and a reflection of virtual training. Updated information included as it relates to training availability, New PRIDE formats, and LCF making training On Demand (YouTube/can be sent and completed electronically)

Right # 3 Support:

*Be informed on how to contact the placement agency for assistance and access to support services. **
Clarification added regarding what medical coordination and support is provided by Little City.

Right #4 On-time Financial Reimbursement:

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 received 3% pay increase effective July 01, 2021; this standard was revised to reflect that change.

9. A list of all revised Responsibility narratives.

Responsibility #5: Recognize your own strengths, limitations and need for support

Additional language added to this Responsibility to include how Little City helps foster parents recognized their own strengths, limitations and need for support.

10. If no revisions were made, please explain why: N/A

FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS

Your rights are dictated by Illinois Law, Rule 340 found
<http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/089003400c00600r.html>

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

<p>1. <u>Dignity, Respect and Consideration:</u> <i>Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration.</i></p>
<p>2. <u>Training:</u> <i>Be provided Pre-Service and on-going training to meet needs and improve skills.</i></p>
<p>3. <u>Support:</u> <i>Be informed on how to contact the placement agency for assistance and access to support services.</i></p>
<p>4. <u>On-Time Financial Reimbursement:</u> <i>Receive timely financial reimbursement for care included in the service plan.</i></p>
<p>5. <u>A Placement Plan:</u> <i>Be provided with information about the agency's plan for placement that includes supporting family relationships and cultural heritage.</i></p>
<p>6. <u>Fair, Timely and Impartial Investigations:</u> <i>Be provided fair, timely and impartial investigations, including mediation and/or administrative review and explanations of decisions concerning licensing.</i></p>
<p>7. <u>Information About Children:</u> <i>Receive additional and necessary information relevant to the child's care.</i></p>
<p>8. <u>Information Required by Acts of Law from DCFS</u> <i>Be given information concerning the child.</i></p>
<p>9. <u>Be Included in Team Meetings:</u> <i>Be notified of scheduled meetings concerning the child and decisions made concerning the child. To have input concerning the plan of services for the child and to communicate with other professionals who work with the child.</i></p>
<p>10. <u>Disclosure of Information:</u> <i>To have any information the caseworker has about the child and his family that pertains to the child's needs and care.</i></p>
<p>11. <u>Written Notice of Placement Changes:</u> <i>Receive written notice of any plans to end placement, along with the reason and appeal information.</i></p>
<p>12. <u>Appear at Court:</u> <i>Receive timely notification and invitations to attend of court hearings.</i></p>
<p>13. <u>Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care:</u> <i>Be considered as a placement option for foster children formerly in their care.</i></p>
<p>14. <u>Timely Access to Service Appeal System:</u> <i>Foster parents have the right to have access to an agency or DCFS' appeals process without retaliation.</i></p>
<p>15. <u>Call the Foster Parent Hotline:</u> <i>Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and information on reporting staff misconduct.</i></p>

RIGHT #1: DIGNITY, RESPECT & CONSIDERATION

Foster parents have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration. They are professional members of the child welfare team.

- LCF's Treatment Philosophy
- Continuous and inclusive communication
- Inclusion in all aspects of the child's care as critical members of the youth's team
- Foster Parent Recognition and Appreciation

The mission and values statements of Little City Foundation's (LCF) Foster Care and Adoption Program reflect inclusion and engagement of foster parents as key members of the treatment team.

Little City understands the importance of engaging foster parents as valued treatment team members in team meetings and supervision, with noted improvement and feedback from supervisors and foster parents.

Little City continues to communicate with our foster parents on many platforms including but not limited to e-mail, text and mail to ensure information was received in a timely manner. Program information, like training opportunities and more, are consistently posted on the agency's Facebook page for timely dissemination as well. Supervisors attend CFTMs to ensure all program- and case-related information is shared.

Little City's Treatment Philosophy defines the *foster parent relationship* with the child as being *the key change agent* in the child's treatment and life. Little City has expanded upon our treatment philosophy by introducing a new theoretical approach, Collaborative Problem Solving, that furthers foster parent inclusion as key team members in ensuring child well-being. The key concept to this approach is "Kids do well if they can" and "Families do well if they can."

Foster Parents are invited and expected to participate in all aspects of care and planning for the youth in their care, including the following: Court hearings; Administrative Case Reviews (ACR); Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs); education and school-related meetings; medical-related intervention and care; and child- and family-therapy (LCF provides weekly, in-home therapy to children and their foster families) during home visits (which occur 3x/month for specialized cases, which make-up a majority of the cases served by Little City), during CFTMs, and through weekly check-ins via phone, text, and/or e-mail, as foster parents are vital members of the youth's treatment team.

Supervisors and Licensing & Support Supervisor conduct random phone calls, regular home visits, licensing visits, and participate in CFTMs to the families on their case workers' caseloads to inquire about services, offer consideration for foster parents when coordinating services and visits, and provide timely follow up on any issues. Concerns are addressed with workers during supervision and reflected in annual performance evaluations.

Home visits are conducted three times a month and CTFMs quarterly by program child welfare specialists. These regular contacts provide an opportunity for foster parents to partner with staff, management and collaterals to share information. Little City has created a detailed home visit checklist and CFTM guide for case managers to use to ensure comprehensive care is being provided to the children in our program and to ultimately ensure the safety, well-being and permanence of those served.

Please note that due to COVID 19 Pandemic and DCFS policy updates in response to the pandemic, recommendations regarding visitation may and can be amended throughout the year.

Little City recognizes the outstanding work our foster parents do through the following:

- *Sharing Success Stories in our quarterly newsletter; on our website <https://www.littlecity.org/foster>, Facebook page www.facebook.com/LittleCityFosterCare, on Twitter <https://twitter.com/LCFFosterCare>; and through sharing our YouTube videos (3 minute version: <https://youtu.be/dZPGcHf9T3E>, 1 minute version: <https://youtu.be/z-szObUrmIQ>.*
- *We also provide our foster parents the platform to shine by co-training LCF pre-service and on-going foster parent trainings. The Keeping It Real course of LCF pre-service is fully led by foster parents to provide a real insight into foster parenting from foster parents' perspectives.*
- *Little City awarded over \$500 in recruitment bonuses and gift cards to foster parents who referred prospective foster parents to Little City's informational orientation sessions and/or who became licensed as foster parents in 2021.*
- *Foster Parent Recognition and Appreciation 4/21/2021 occurred through a virtual engagement event. Prior to the event, programs were mailed out in addition to small gifts and certificates. The event featured recognition of years of service, singing, and remarks of appreciation. Little City also provided yard signs for our Foster Parents to promote the foster parent experience. The yard signs read: "Foster Parents are the key to Success."*
- *Little City held our annual picnic in person. This picnic was held in August instead of June. Little City will revisit this new month for our annual picnic in 2023 as well.*
- *This Fall, the program received donations from Sharing Cousins which provided birthday boxes to youth in the program. Pastries from Cakes for Kids. Both generous donations will run for a year which will capture our current youth in program.*
- *Program is hosting an Annual Holiday Party (December 2021 virtually).*

RIGHT #2: TRAINING

Foster parents have the right to be provided training - both pre-service and ongoing training - to ensure they have all the tools they need to meet the needs of children in their care, as well as their own needs.

- LCF-hosted Training for Foster Parents to attain required 16 CEUS/year including referring foster parents to DCFS Educational Advocacy Training each
- Mutual Training Needs Assessment and Training Plans
- DCFS- and Community-Based Linkages for Training

Little City's Foster Care and Adoption Program serves children with special needs, including intellectual, developmental, and emotional/behavioral disabilities in our specialized foster care program and siblings of these minors in our traditional foster care program. Given the higher level of need of our program participants, LCF provides tailored pre-service and on-going trainings specific to the clients we serve, consistent with procedures, and in compliance with the DCFS' required 16 annual training hours a year for specialized foster parents (see training attachment.) Training evaluation forms specifically noted satisfaction with the program's trainers and offered courses. Little City also utilizes the Care Giver Matching Tool as well as a home study to assess training needs of new foster parents. In Pre-Service Training, current foster parents host and conduct the "Keeping it Real" session. Using experienced foster parents during this session, and other monthly training as co-trainers, our new homes benefit from their years of knowledge.

In 2021, with our pivot to virtual training due to the worldwide pandemic, this change has garnered a much better attendance in our training along with volunteers who are available to call and get RSVP's for monthly and specialty training. This change was implemented in 2020. With Little City moving to virtual training the volunteers have been able to help get more foster parents to attend training on a regular basis. The 2023 Training calendar was again developed with input from staff and foster parents. Little City will work continuously with our families to provide them with training that is relevant and informative. Little City will continue to engage foster parents in mutually assessing their training needs and locating/developing relevant training. This is done at each semi-annual monitoring appointment, as well as reviewing evaluations following monthly training and reviewing Licensing questionnaires received from Little City staff members.

Little City has returned to limited in person training for CPR with a capacity limit of 4 to 5 people plus the trainer. Little City follows the American Heart Association recommendations, guidelines for CPR. AHA restrictions have been eased CPR is held with a limited number of participants in person to ensure the safety of all participants. CPI: Non-Violent Crisis Intervention will remain virtual this upcoming year. Training will remain on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, with two sessions held virtually via the Teams programs. Little City was able to host over 118 hours of training in 2021.

Foster parents have continued to respond well to virtual and on Demand training. Little City will maintain virtual training for 2023. Please see attached the proposed Training Calendar for 2023.

In 2019 Little City incorporated a new training curriculum ARC Reflections Training: Attachment Regulation and Competency. This training was presented to Little City staff and to all Little City Foster Parents in 2021. The ARC training series will be delivered in 2023 as a specialty training. In 2021/2023, we will continue to carry over these tools, including the Individual Crisis Management Plans and the Psychotropic Medication Manual, into our ARC training model. We will also continue to offer specialty training on autism, medication management, or other topics that are relevant or needed.

Little City pre-service training continues to be offered quarterly in January, April, July and October. *Training is held virtually on Tuesday/Thursday evenings.* Foster parents are also required to complete CPR Training, CPI: Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training and 10 volunteer hours with children within our specialized foster care and adoption program prior to licensure. In FY18/19, Little City developed a pre-service training manual and required homework, which was continued in 2020. This manual will be updated for 2021 as the training department continues to incorporate the ARC system into our trauma training.

Little City sends out a letter at the end of the year with our New Year training calendar. Little City provides each family with training topics that they may be interested in based on the type of child(ren) they have placed, or want placed, in their care. Little City licensing workers are tasked with contacting their foster parents to assess training needs and desires, and then enroll them in applicable training. Licensing workers can assess the family more readily when conducting their semiannual licensing visit.

All foster parents are required to complete DCFS's PRIDE Training. Little City is currently a part of the Pilot program NTDC, 34 hours of training and 1 hour of orientation are required and after licensure 5 supplemental training. PRIDE TRAINING will be updated according to Little City participation in the pilot program. Little City ensures enrollment in PRIDE training, liaises with the DCFS trainers, and incorporates what is learned in our comprehensive home study assessments.

Little City also hosts DCFS-sponsored on-going training. Little City has provided our foster parents with information to access their DCFS VTC Training accounts in order to complete their annual training requirements (16 hours per year for specialized foster parents.)

<https://www.dcfstraining.org/vtc/home/home.action>

RIGHT #3: SUPPORT

Foster parents have the right to be well supported in their efforts to be excellent parents to children.

- 24/7 Crisis Support
- Individualized, wraparound services tailored to each youth and family's needs
- Respite support

Little City's foster parents remark in trainings, semi-annual monitoring, and Satisfaction Surveys that overall, they feel supported by Little City's team of staff including licensing, case management, therapists, and supervisory staff. In the past, we have offered an in-person Foster Parent Advisory group and support groups, however, following feedback from the foster parents, these groups were changed to a closed Facebook Support group only available to Little City parents. This group was discontinued this year due to ongoing limited participation and engagement. Agency continues to serve as a conduit for foster parents, connecting foster parents in need of information, respite and support.

Little City staff are available to foster parents and the youth in their care 24/7, per our detailed Emergency Contact Procedure provided in pre-service and ongoing trainings and within the Child File upon the placement of a youth in the home, and as detailed herein. Foster parents receive crisis management training through our pre-service and on-going training, and written information and resources are provided to foster parents upon the placement of a child in the Child Files. Little City has implemented a new On Call system effective 10/31/2016. Case Managers are no longer on call 24/7 during the week for their own cases. The agency has moved to a weeklong on call staff rotation and case managers and therapists are assigned for one entire week Monday to Monday. Supervisory staff are available for back-up support. This information has been sent out to all foster parents via e-mail, and regular mail, and will be distributed with this finalized plan. **Little City's on-call number is (847) 358-5510.** Foster parents are to call this number after business hours to be connected to an on-call staff.

Little City provides comprehensive home- and community-based wraparound services to the clients and their families in our care. Services may include the following:

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Respite
- Weekly in-home clinical support (individual and foster parent/child therapy)
- Intensive case management (3x/month home visits)
- Crisis Support
- Family Stabilization Specialist support services
- Transportation assistance
- NEW in 2020 – E-learning, one to one, remote support
- NEW in 2020 – ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) therapy at reduced rates
- Service Coordination and More!

Case managers support our foster parents by making sure that the child's needs are being met in the community, at school, and in healthcare. Little City helps identify and select resources, plan meetings and advocate as needed. Little City completes quarterly CFTMs, with the bi-annual meetings being to review and update the child's Service Plan and visitation plans to ensure appropriate service array, and mutual agreement to those services and plans for the child.

If a child in Little City’s traditional foster care program, or placed within a relative foster home, requires placement stabilization or is experiencing a crisis, IPS (formerly SOC) services may be utilized. IPS uses a wraparound model to ensure support for a child and his/her family. Examples of services IPS may be able to provide include individual, family and group therapy; mentoring and tutoring; support groups for foster parents; case and school management; and advocacy. Little City refers youth to IPS when mutually identified by the treatment team.

Children served within Little City’s specialized foster care program are eligible for paid respite through the agency. The agency supports informal respite by connecting foster parents with one another through a foster parent mentoring and support program. During this last year we have been able to continue to explore ways in which to expand and formalize our respite program to include internal foster parent support. Foster Parents are required to submit Respite form to the agency no later than the 5th of the month in order to receive respite payment.

Foster parents are regularly provided information about support services available to them in training, via print notices, through social media channels, and during in-person contacts with agency staff, and via distribution of this plan. Information about Little City’s supportive services are communicated upon placement and reviewed in CFTMs. Foster parents may request supportive services for the child and/or him/herself at any time by contacting program staff.

Support Services are tailored to each individual child and family’s needs:

All cases receive:	Additional supports, by need:
Intensive, in-home case management services including at least 3x/month in-person contact with children and their caregivers. Additional monthly contacts are made to collaterals on the case.	Mentoring
24 hour/7 day a week crisis support	Tutoring and/or one to one remote assistance with E-learning
Service coordination for child’s special needs	Recreational programming, including art and sports
Educational advocacy.	Medical coordination and support * Provided by Case Manager when needed
Monthly stipend that includes transportation assistance	Mental Health Practitioner* New 2021
Court advocacy for each child	ABA services offered at a reduced rate through Little City Home-base Community Support
Monthly training at Little City	
Assessment and service planning including ICAP, Vineland, CANS, CERAP, IA, Service Plans, Ansell-Casey	

Clinical services (therapy) for behavioral, emotional, and/or developmental challenges. LCF's clinical team provides home-based clinical services that are developmentally, behaviorally, and play-based using evidence-based approaches. Services include individual and foster parent-child family therapy weekly.

Transition Planning

Adoption and Guardianship Assistance

Respite

RIGHT #4: TIMELY FINANCIAL REIMBURSEMENT

Foster parents have the right to receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with the care needs of the child as specified in the service plan.

- Description of LCF Contracts and Associated Daily Board Rates
- Additional Funds Available to Support Youth
- Funding Options for Teenagers in Placement
- Agency Payment for Additional Support Services
- Procedure for Resolving Reimbursement Issues

Foster Parents will be reimbursed daily for each night that a youth lives in their home. Payments are directly deposited, or sent by mail, monthly. Payments are made on the 15th of each month. If the 15th of the month falls on a weekend, payments are made on the Friday before.

Little City subcontracts with DCFS as a purchase of service (POS) agency to provide care to children within four (4) different foster care contracts:

- 1) **Traditional Contract:** Youth served on Little City's traditional contract have experienced abuse and/or neglect and may have some behavioral, emotional, or other special needs, but not at the level requiring the specialized services and supports of a child served in our specialized program. **Foster parents are paid the traditional rate based upon the child's age as determined by DCFS (Little City follows DCFS payment schedule; See Table below.)** All the children served on Little City's traditional contract are siblings to a child served on Little City's specialized contract. Traditional children receive a minimum of once monthly home visits. They may also engage in supportive services that include therapy, educational support, or medication management.
- 2) **Specialized Contract:** Youth served on Little City's specialized contract (95% of program participants) have complex, multi-faceted documented specialized needs; primary among those needs is being diagnosed with an intellectual, developmental, and/or emotional/behavioral disability. Specialized children require intensive service provision and coordination, supervision, and care to promote their well-being. **Foster parents are paid the specialized rate (see Table below.)** A child's case must be heard before a multidisciplinary team of professionals at a CIPP meeting convened at DCFS and moderated by a neutral party (a DCFS staff) in order to be classified as "specialized" and thus, receive the specialized rate. **Youth with special needs receive more intensive supports as outlined in Narrative #3 above.**
- 3) **Adolescent Specialized Contract:** Children served on Little City's Adolescent Specialized Contract must be at least 11 years old and exhibit moderate to severe adjustment, behavioral, emotional, or developmental needs requiring intensive supports and services to maintain the minor in a foster home placement. Children served on this contract have often stepped down from a residential placement setting and require rigorous supervision and support to maintain placement in foster care. **Foster parents are paid the adolescent specialized rate (see Table below.) Adolescent youth receive intensive wrap-around services as outlined in Narrative #3 above.**
- 4) **Home of Relative Contract/ Fictive Kin:** Children residing within unlicensed homes of relatives or fictive kin are reimbursed by Little City effective July 2021, on a monthly (approximately \$329/month/child.) **If a child has been determined by the treatment team to need additional**

supportive services, the family can receive Difficulty of Care rate if they have an application for licensure pending on the DCFS system.

- 5) If at any time, you feel that a child is incorrectly classified, we will work with you and DCFS to rectify this right away.

Traditional Board Payment Rates: (these rates are consistent with those tendered by DCFS). These rates reflect DCFS's 3% Rate Increase Effective July 1, 2021.

Age of Child	Age of Child	Board	Clothing	Allowance	Total Monthly Rate
0 – 11 mo	0 – 11 mo	\$408.00	\$44.00	\$16.00	\$ 468.00
1 – 4 years	1 – 4 years	\$410.00	\$49.00	\$17.00	\$476.00
5 – 8 years	5 – 8 years	\$415.00	\$65.00	\$18.00	\$498.00
9 – 11 years	9 – 11 years	\$423.00	\$76.00	\$29.00	\$528.00
12 and over	12 and over	\$434.00	\$86.00	\$52.00	\$572.00
Unlicensed Foster Care Rate Monthly*					\$329.00

Specialized Board Payment Rates:

Based on 31-day calculation: 7/1/2021

Board & Services per Day/Month	Transportation per Day/Month	Total Rate per Day/Month
\$41.58/ \$1288.98	\$6.88 / \$213.28	\$48.46 / \$1502.26

* FPs receive slightly varying rates month to month depending on the number of days in a month: $\$48.46 \times 31 = \$1,502.26$; $\$48.46 \times 30 = \$1,453.80$; $\$48.46 \times 28$ (February) = $\$1,356.88$.

In accordance with the standards set by the current Contract with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) and in accordance with the definitions of Department Rule 359, Authorized Child Care Payments, Little City Foster Parents caring for Specialized Level of Care clients shall be reimbursed for the following expenses in the amounts indicated. Clothing and allowance *minimums* are based on the traditional care rates established for kids. (*3% increase should be added to each area*)

Monthly

A. Room and Board **\$ 408.00**

Food and Shelter, including basic hygiene and daily living needs.

B. Transportation **\$ 207.08**

Foster parents are responsible for transporting the youth(s), or arranging for youth(s)' transportation, to/from all services and appointments. *See LCF Transportation Agreement for more info.*

C. Special Supervision & Services **\$806.81**

Any expenses related to the child's special needs. This may include tutoring, therapeutic lessons, medical needs, and services. Expenses related to occasional and non-recurring situations such as but not limited to school uniforms, graduation expenses, summer camp, or other summer programs, recreation, etc. are included here. This fee can be saved month to month for seasonal expenses. The expenses charged to this fee are to be recorded by the foster parent on the Monthly Expenditure Form. Any money that is not spent is expected to be deposited into a bank account for the child.

Monthly

D. Clothing* (*Amount varies by child's age. Based on a 31-day Month*) Funds included in Board & Services Monthly clothing needs. The expenses charged to this fee are to be recorded by the foster parent on the Monthly Expenditure Sheet and clothing purchased is to be added to the Clothing Inventory.

E. Allowance/Hygiene* (*Amount varies by child's age. Based on a 31-day Month*) Funds included in Board & Services Monthly allowance and special costs associated with special needs hygiene and grooming needs. The expenses charged to this fee are to be recorded by the foster parent on the Monthly Expenditure Sheet. Special needs hygiene does not include soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc, as these basic hygiene essentials must be provided. Receipts and/or signature of allowance issued are to be attached to the Expenditure Sheet.

**See Above Chart re: Clothing, Allowance & Hygiene for Youth in Care*

***Please note that on the contracts that are provided for the families there is a further breakdown on monthly funding.**

Funds Paid To, and/or In Support of Youth:

The traditional payment rate breaks down the allotment of minimum funds to be set aside monthly based on a child's age in the areas of clothing and allowance. Funds provided for the care of a youth are not designed or intended to cover all costs of a youth's care; rather, to offer additional financial support to supplement one's own financial resources. Youth served on Little City's specialized contracts receive a significant amount of additional funding to support needed resources, services, and items for the youth.

Some foster parents have reported that they pay a youth in their care \$138 a month to cover the funds owed for allowance and clothing. Other parents reported providing their youth with a prepaid gift card with allowance funds on it for purchase of goods/items at the youth's discretion. Program provides allowance logs to track the disbursement of funds per procedure. Program also completes Clothing Inventories twice yearly, at a minimum, to ensure youth has adequate clothing.

Program recommends disbursing funds to youth after an assessment of their ability to manage their funds. Foster parents are also encouraged to assist youth in establishing saving accounts. The graduates from the Financial Literacy Class now have bank accounts, and many other youths in the program do as well. Teenage youth need to learn skills to be more independent. Aligned with this is taking public transportation to/from school and/or work. Little City pays foster parents \$6.88/day, or \$213.28/monthly, in a 31-day month, in support of the youth's transportation. As such, the Foster Parent Advisory Committee Members supported the recommendation that foster parents purchase youth a monthly bus pass. Many foster parents reported the benefits of doing this with the youth in their care. Extra funds to support a youth's graduation from High School are available per the DCFS schedule of payments.

Teenage youth in care are eligible for additional funds and resources as outlined in DCFS's "Get GOAL'D" Handbook available on DCFS's website.

- Some of these include life skills and vocational training; employment incentive funds; college scholarships; and more!
- All youth who are scheduled to attain independence upon turning 21 years of age are eligible for a transition fund payment of \$1321.00 upon emancipation if the youth has successfully completed the Countdown to 21 protocols per DCFS procedure. Little City staff engages the youth and their foster family in the process to ensure payment.

Agency Payment for Additional Supportive Services:

(1) Respite: Little City offers additional financial reimbursement for respite services. Little City offers a minimum of 15 hours a month of paid respite to foster parents serving children on LCF's adolescent and specialized contracts. Respite is reviewed quarterly and based upon the needs of the child and family. Foster Parents are reimbursed when they submit their completed respite forms. **All reimbursement forms are due by the 5th of the month to get reimbursed. Late respite forms will not be reimbursed.**

(2) Sibling and Parent-Child Visitation: Little City strives to maintain and strengthen family relationships. LCF (Little City Foundation) reimburses foster parents for their supervision of sibling visits at the rate of \$27.25/hour up to \$109/month plus a maximum of \$55/month for mileage traveled between the foster family home and the visit site (so a total of \$150/month is available!) Travel reimbursement is calculated at the agency's mileage reimbursement rate. **Little City reimburses at the IRS rate and the current rate is \$0.565/mile as of this writing.** Documentation for the supervision of

sibling visitation and transportation must accompany the request for reimbursement, the agency requests receipt of these monthly.

<p>Sibling Reimbursement Paid on a Monthly Basis to the <u>Host</u> of the Visit:</p> <p>\$27.25/Hour up to \$109/month</p>	<p>Sibling Visit Reimbursement Paid on a Monthly Basis to any foster parent responsible for <u>transporting</u> (regardless of being the host of the sibling visit :)</p> <p>Effective 7/1/2021 0.56 cents a mile to/from the foster parent home to the visit site up to \$55 total for the month. (IRS rate)</p>
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Foster Parents have the responsibility – and receive monthly funds - of ensuring the youth in their care come prepared for sibling, parent-child, school, and/or other community-based outings that an agency representative (CWS, FSS, Therapist, Supervisor, Licensing) may be assisting with by providing essential care items (diapers, food, snacks, medication, preferred toys). Expenses incurred by agency staff when youth come to prescheduled visits will be deducted from FP monthly board care stipends.

- (3) **Birth Parent Reunification Support Payments: Foster parents and biological parents must mutually agree to participate in the family reunification project, and timely reimbursement requires monthly submission of the Special Service Fee Log.** Biological parent reunification visits are reimbursed according to the Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee Log (CFS 1042-L) schedule, which is as follows:

Level 1	3 Activities	\$75
Level 2	6 Activities	\$150
Level 3	9 Activities	\$250
Level 4	12 Activities	\$400

- (4) **Transportation Support: Little City** reimburses foster parents for transporting their children to and from school, doctor visits, social activities, etcetera. For each calendar day, they are reimbursed \$6.88 for transportation, which is included monthly in the board payment. It is expected that foster parents provide transportation for clients in their care to/from visits and other appointments such as parent child visits, sibling visits, medical appointments and required meetings such as CIPP’s. Little City reserves the right to reduce or eliminate the transportation stipend if transportation, or arrangements for transportation, are not provided by the foster family. Little City staff will transport clients to/from visits and other appointments when mutually agreed upon between the staff member and the foster parent. The foster parent(s)’ transportation stipend will not be reduced in these instances.

Per agreement from LCF’s Foster Parent’s, clients who self-transport to and from school and required appointments must be provided a bus card, or Little City will deduct the cost from their transportation stipend to fund the purchase of a bus card.

(5) Extra Funds to Support Youth Stepping-Down from Residential Placement Settings:

- a. Placement Enhancement: DCFS will provide foster parents extra funds when taking a child from residential placement into their homes. These families will receive a stipend of \$196.00 per child per month in addition to their specialized payment rate, for up to one year after that youth has stepped down from residential placement. This funding is paid directly to the foster parent from Little City and included within the monthly board payment. The youth will also qualify for additional wraparound service support.
- b. Foster Parents who take residential step-down placements are also able to receive funding up to \$335 for costs incurred when visiting the youth and for their participation in staffing's for the youth and outings.

(6) Administrative Rule 13: Foster Parent Damage Reimbursement Program:

In conjunction with DCFS Administrative Rule 13, Little City will assist and support foster parents in attaining reimbursement for property damage and other domains as covered in the Rule. In short, any time a youth in care causes damage to a foster home or foster parent's property, the foster parent must collect three quotes from three separate vendors with cost estimates and run those through Little City/DCFS before initiating the work for consideration for reimbursement.

(7) Little City will be able to provide all foster parents upon request a detailed print out of payments made to them on behalf of the youth in their care.

Procedure for Resolving Payment Problems:

If there are any questions or concerns regarding payment, foster parents may contact the Office Manager at 773-265-1539 (Main #) or 773-916-4061 (Direct # -voicemails are delivered to staff e-mail) or by email, jtorres@littlecity.org, who will investigate the inquiry with accounting. The Manager will respond to the foster parent within 24 hours of how and when the matter is to be resolved. ***Please note that during the pandemic response may take up to 48 hours (about 2 days).*** If, after following these methods, there are still unresolved issues, the foster parent is encouraged to call or email the Director, Valencia Randolph, directly at (773) 916-4073 office, 312-545-3696 Cell, email/ vrandolph@littlecity.org. Foster parents may file a grievance or service appeal according to the grievance procedure (See Right #14) if these channels have not sufficiently resolved the issue.

RIGHT #5: A PLACEMENT PLAN

Foster parents have the right to be provided with 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 responsibility to support activities that will promote the child's right to relationships with his or her birth family and cultural heritage.

- Connections and Ties to Biological Family – including Fictive Kin – and Respecting Diversity
- Life Books
- Matching and Placement Assessment Tools
- Ongoing Assessment Tools provided to Foster Parents to Ensure Placement Stability

Little City primarily seeks to place children in the homes of relatives or with siblings if possible. Placement within a child's community of origin, and/or within a home of similar cultural, ethnic, racial, religious background as the child is sought-out as a primary placement resource. We also seek placements with families who are understanding of a child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE). In instances when this cannot occur, Little City educates the foster parents about the child's SOGIE and cultural, ethnic, racial, religious background and ensures the family can accommodate those needs before proceeding with placement. Adherence to this expectation is reviewed during bi-annual licensing visits. Little City's "Cultural Sensitivity" training further addresses these areas.

Little City regularly discusses and trains staff and foster parents about the importance of engaging with biological parents, siblings, extended family members, and maintaining contact with other people who the child identifies as important in his/her life from our initial engagement with the family and throughout the life of the case. Little City educates families about reunification and sibling visits, including the foster parents' role in the process, and resources available to them (including additional financial support – see Right #4.) Case Managers and therapists use Life books as tools for engaging the youth and his/her foster family in an on-going discussion about important connections, and then taking action to make those connections. *2020 has shown itself to be a year of change. Since the Pandemic Little City has been able to expand on the use of Zoom and TEAMS as way to keep connections as well as build connections for our youth. Program has increased use of Zoom, TEAMS and FaceTime to facilitate contact with family.*

Little City seeks to ensure that foster parents have all the necessary information needed to make sound placement decisions, as the agency views placements into our foster homes as long-term commitments. Foster parents are provided with information about the child verbally on the phone to determine interest in placement. If interested, the agency develops a transition plan that involves sharing information in writing and developing on-going visitation between the family and the child to assess fit. If all pre-placement visits go well, staffing occurs to determine a transition date into the home. Little City has expanded our use of the Youth Pre-Matching Questionnaire, Foster Parent Questionnaire, and Household Agreement as tools to assess fitness for matching, and to prepare both the youth and the foster family for a prospective placement. These tools are used in conjunction with a youth's residential team if s/he is stepping down from residential, in addition to youths transitioning into program from other settings and within program as well.

Foster parents aid in the development of the child's Integrative Assessment (IA), the child's Service Plan, visitation plans, and permanency planning by engaging with the case manager during 3x/month home visits, quarterly CFTMs, ACRs (Administrative Case Review), and Court. Little City seeks the input of foster parents in the above-mentioned areas by treating them as valued members of the treatment team and recognizing that they are essential in planning for the care of youths in their care.

LCF ensures this by eliciting their input as to service provisions they see as important for the stability of the child in their care and inquiring about the adjustment to and progress in their home during home visits, quarterly child, and family team meetings, and at ACR and Court. The case manager and supervisor review and discuss the current IA, Service Plan, visitation plans, and permanency planning with the foster parent and then mutually agree upon the goals for the updated plans. Foster parents receive copies of all mutually agreed plans in writing. The child's permanency goal, and any recommendations to amend the goal, are discussed as part of this planning process. LCF does not make recommendations to amend a child's permanency goal without consulting foster parents first. LCF always inquires with foster parents if they would be interested in being a long-term placement option for a child if the goal was amended from return home to adoption, guardianship and/or independence as appropriate based upon the child's needs.

Little City serves youth with special needs including intellectual, developmental, and emotional/behavioral disabilities, most of whom are between the ages of 12-21. We have also noted a change to the referrals received by program from DCFS to being more complex, high-need youth stepping-down from residential, in shelters or hospital settings, or having longer lengths of stay in foster care with multiple placement disruptions and service needs. In response, Little City has expanded our pre-matching and placement procedures (as described above) and our training to staff foster parents in support of our youth's successful attainment of skills necessary for successful independence and transition to adulthood. Specifically, the program uses the following to promote skill-building for independence:

- Ansell-Casey to assess youth's strengths and needs
- Financial Literacy Training: Little City continues to train all youth who can participate qualify and who can participate per their intellectual/developmental disability in financial literacy. FY21 Little City trainers were able to deliver Financial Literacy to 4 program participants.
- Comprehensive Assessment for Independence using the Youth in Transition team meeting outline, mutually developed with youth, foster parent, and youth's professional team, which then drives service planning.
- Team participation and engagement in D-CIPPs
- Program takes active steps to transition youth to DHS (Department of Human Services) services (as eligible per their intellectual/developmental disability) by collaborating with DCFS per procedure; enrolling youth on the Illinois' PUNS (Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services) list; attaining an updated psychological and medical; ensuring Social Security benefits; and more as required by procedure beginning at age 17.5.

Little City has a robust DHS program that serves adults. We have successfully transferred several youths from our DCFS foster care program to our DHS Home-Based Supports program, which allows youths to remain in their same (foster) home after attaining independence at age 21. This ability to provide our youths with continuity of care has resulted in improved well-being outcomes.

Little City has successfully implemented the use of the Placement Disruption Checklist (developed based on staff feedback and with foster parent agreement in FY17) for use to ensure all a youth's belongings are sent clean in a nice storage container or suitcase with him/her when moving to a new home. Program also initiated a luggage drive to provide youth in care with necessary luggage to store their belongings.

RIGHT #6: LICENSING INVESTIGATIONS

Foster parents have the right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of alleged violations concerning the foster parent's licensure, including the right to request mediation and an administrative review and explanation of the decisions made concerning the investigation and/or foster home license.

- Licensing Investigations Defined per DCFS/Child Care Act/402 Rule/Procedure
- Confidentiality and the Right to an Advocate in Licensing Investigations
- Two Types of Licensing Investigations, Defined.
- Outcomes and Next Steps after the Completion of a Licensing Investigation

This year, Little City spent ample time discussing this right in the Foster Parent Implementation Training and Advisory Councils. Foster parents remarked having an improved understanding for the purpose and outcomes of licensing investigations as a result.

The purpose of a licensing investigation is to assess whether there has been any violation to 402 licensing standards or the Child Care Act within an agency-licensed foster home facility. Licensing investigations do not assess abuse or neglect.

Licensing investigations are based on allegations made by a complaint. Complaints may come from a variety of sources including direct observation from agency staff visiting the home. Complaints are also sometimes routed to the agency through the State Central Register (SCR) when a Hotline call has been made against the home. Little City receives SCR notices in writing via mail and conducts a concurrent licensing investigation in these instances (more information below.) After a complaint is received in the licensing department, the licensing supervisor reviews the complaint and assigns it to the licensing representative. The licensing supervisor and licensing representative meet to review the allegations and create a plan of action regarding the investigation.

All licensing investigations are conducted under the auspice that the information presented is an allegation. The licensing staff will conduct a thorough, non-partial investigation per DCFS policy and procedure (as detailed here.)

Licensing staff are responsible for conducting non-judgmental, objective investigations into the allegations, which includes interviewing all parties within the foster home, the reporter, and any collaterals that may provide useful information into the investigation. An unannounced home visit to the foster home is conducted within 2 business days of receiving the complaint in the licensing department to notify the parent of the licensing violations noted in the report. Licensing workers are responsible for explaining the investigation procedure with the foster parents and documenting their investigative assessments on the CFS 596 series of forms.

Foster parents are informed of confidentiality related to licensing investigations, and their right to have an advocate present, at the initial unannounced home visit. Foster parents consent or decline the right to an advocate by signing the Right to an Advocate (CFS 596-29) form. If the foster parent requests the presence of an advocate, who is any person of the foster parent's choosing, the interview component of the licensing investigation may be delayed up to 4 hours; however, licensing workers have the right to investigate the premises of the home to ensure there are no environmental risks to any children in placement or household members.

There are two types of licensing investigations depending on the nature of the allegations:

- (1) Stand-alone investigations: Stand-alone investigations are when violations to 402 licensing rules are alleged, and
- (2) Concurrent investigations: Concurrent allegations are when Little City's licensing department and DCFS Department of Child Protection (DCP) investigate allegations at the same time because there has been a report of abuse or neglect within the foster home made to the DCFS Hotline.

Investigations require completion within 30 days per DCFS rule; however, a 30-day extension may be granted by the licensing supervisor if needed to gather all information and complete interviews necessary for a fair and impartial investigation. The supervisor reviews the investigation within 5 days. The licensing worker is responsible for notifying the foster parent of the findings of the investigation within five days after receiving supervisory approval. The outcome of the licensing investigation is communicated to the foster parent in writing via a letter and verbally over the phone. The Guardian Ad Litem of any children in placement is notified via 596-L letter when any concurrent investigations occur, and caseworkers are always notified of the investigation results. The original complainant is also notified of the outcome via 596- 05 letter.

All completed licensing investigations are sent to Little City's Agencies and Institutions (A&I) Representative at DCFS for review. A & I have 7 days to review in investigation. If the investigation meets the Procedure 383 standards for licensing investigations, the A&I representative approves the investigation and its findings, and the investigation is maintained within the licensing file. If the A&I Representative finds any errors to the investigation, Little City's licensing team is responsible for correcting those errors, which may involve additional interviews, visits to the home, and collection of documents.

Licensing investigations will yield one of two results:

(1) Substantiated.

A substantiated violation means that the licensing team found violations to 402 and/or the Child Care Act within the home as alleged, or as observed/assessed during their home visits and interviews. The family is notified via phone and in writing, and a Corrective Action Plan is developed to correct the cited violations per procedure. The licensing representative will notify the family of any substantiated findings in writing via the 596-04 letter; this letter offers the foster parent the opportunity for an informal review of the investigation findings with the licensing supervisor.

(2) Unsubstantiated.

The agency also develops a Corrective Action Plan and reviews this with the foster parent to correct any violations noted within the investigation. Foster parents must sign the corrective plan as an indication that the corrective action plan has been reviewed with them. Foster parents typically have 30 days to correct any violations. The agency conducts regular unannounced home visits while a Corrective Plan is pending. If a foster family fails to correct the violations as noted on the Corrective Plan, the agency may begin to enforce further licensing actions that may include placing the home on hold for future placements or revocation of the license.

The GAL's office may also elect to place a home on hold status as a result of a licensing investigation. In these instances, Little City must submit a formal request to remove the GAL Hold from the home to DCFS's A&I team for review. These requests include the full licensing investigation packet, supporting documentation, and an agency recommendation letter.

Foster parents may seek recourse to licensing investigations by requesting a supervisory review, filing a grievance, or appealing the findings.

1. A supervisory review should be arranged when:
 - The foster parent disagrees with the alleged violations
 - The foster parent disagrees with the finding of a licensing investigation
 - The licensing supervisor believes a review would help resolve any outstanding issues related to the investigation.
2. Foster parents have the right to mediation of alleged licensing violations. They also have the right to request an administrative review. They may employ both, neither, or only one at their choosing if they feel it would help to yield the fairest result of the investigation. Foster parents may also file a grievance with the agency per Little City's Grievance Policy (Attachment G; also see Right #14.)
3. Licensing Complaints and Grievance Procedures are reviewed with all foster parents during pre-service training. Grievance forms and a copy of the *Service Appeal* and *What you Need to Know about Child Abuse or Neglect Investigation* brochures are shared during an investigation and during foster parent pre-service. Policies are reviewed throughout the year during home visits and CFTMs. Staff are also trained on the policies during their orientation and ongoing at staff meetings. Should there be a complaint concerning a foster parent's license, the foster parent will be informed again of their rights at that time.

RIGHT #7: INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN

Foster parents have 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.

- Critical Information Provided by Agency to Foster Parents Pre-Placement & Ongoing
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

During the Foster Parent Implementation Plan review meetings, one foster parent noted that they do not want redacted information about a child's previous diagnosis. Child history in the form of how the adoption subsidy is written should be made available at the beginning of a placement. Program responded by continuing training for all case management staff on expectations in this domain and conducting intake/disruption internal staffing's to ensure transfer of information in a timely fashion. Overall, foster parents noted satisfaction with the amount of information received on behalf of the youth in their homes.

Foster parents asked that the agency provide additional information as a part of the child file, in particular the child's Birth Certificate and Social Security number. LCF will do our best to have information available within the first 60 days of placement, as this information is not always readily accessible at the time of placement.

Prospective foster parents have the right to all critical information about a child when making the decision to accept a child's placement into the home. Little City has developed several tools to monitor and track a child's background information that has been shared with the child's foster parent.

- Prior to placement: licensing and intake staff complete Little City's Family Needs Assessment (FNA) and Child Caregiver Matching Tool.
- Upon placement: LCF's Intake & Recruitment Coordinator, licensing staff and case management staff review LCF's Child File and Placement Paperwork with the foster parent. The Child File and placement paperwork includes a copies of placement verification documentation (906, Placement Clearance, Placement letters;) emergency contact information and procedures; background information about the child; and the child's portion of the IA, Service Plan and Visitation plan (if pre-established upon accepting the case); day care and respite information; life book resources; Health Works passport; Little City's on-call schedule and staff phone list; and information about grievance, service appeal and other foster parent-specific rights/procedures. *Little City has a Therapy Service Agreement for each child that is referred to Little City Therapist. This document is provided to the family when there is an assessed need for the service.*
- On-going: the case manager and supervisor share all relevant information as it becomes available, but all background information is provided verbally and in-writing at a minimum on a quarterly basis at CFTMs. *Case management staff receive training in information sharing through weekly supervision and monthly case management team meetings.*
- *Goal change: the case manager and supervisor will share information on a child whose goal has changed to adoption and or Subsidize Guardianship. This information shall be detailed with previous information provided in a concise format that resembles formatting of the subsidies.*

Little City's internal continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes monitors obtaining, sharing, and maintaining information and case records on all youth served within the program through SACWIS and case

file reviews. On-going compliance is monitored through our electronic “dashboard” critical document tracking tool that is used in weekly supervision with case management staff.

RIGHT #8: INFORMATION REQUIRED BY ACTS OF DCFS LAW

Foster parents have the right to be given information concerning a child from the Department as required under Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act and from a child welfare agency as required under Section 7.4 9 (c-5) of the Child Care Act of 1969.

- Staff Training on How to and What to Share with Foster Parents Regarding Youth in Care
- Procedures for the Sharing of Information with Foster Parents by Agency Staff

Foster parents must absolutely be provided essential information on behalf of youth in their care to provide the youth with essential services, support, and to understand his/her background. Little City's procedures for how we share information pre-placement and after placement was detailed in Narrative #7 but is further expanded upon here. Foster parents overall remarked that they received necessary and sufficient information in a timely manner. They also stated that they had sufficient information pre-placement to make a good decision about whether to accept a child for placement into their homes in both emergency and planned placement situations.

Little City staff receives training on the importance of sharing all appropriate information with the caregiver, including and how and when this information is to be shared. Information shared includes case history; placement history; social/behavioral/developmental/medical/educational information; and the child's portion of the IA, Service Plan, and Visitation Plans. All available background information about the child is provided prior to and/or upon placement within the LCF Family Needs Assessment, placement paperwork, Child Caregiver Matching Tool, Child File, and within the supporting assessments and documentation provided. All available information is shared with foster parents regardless if a child is accepted for placement in planned, unplanned and/or emergency bases.

Little City provides information about youth on an on-going basis, both verbally and in-writing. Case managers are responsible for providing information as it becomes available during their 3x/month home visits. Little City ensures quarterly CFTM meetings that are never convened without the foster parent(s), and provides foster parents written copies of the minutes reflecting discussion of the above areas and mutual agreement upon service planning. Foster parents are invited and encouraged to attend bi-annual ACRs and Court hearings; if foster parents are unable to attend, LCF staff provides verbal reports on the outcomes of the meetings.

Staff are trained in their responsibility to provide the child's information on an on-going basis upon hire, on-going supervision, and continuously through participation in DCFS and LCF-mandated training. Little City supervisors track their case workers responsibility by reviewing case notes and identifying information distribution in supervision as well as internal staffing with therapeutic team members, during the quarterly child and family team meetings. These areas ensure that as case workers become informed of any additional information that is shared with foster parents. Little City also requires that case workers complete their SACWIS when they submit their mileage on a biweekly basis. This is another way that we ensure case worker accountability. Any amendments to policy are communicated electronically and hard copy through the distribution of updated policies, which are reviewed by management staff in the twice monthly case management team meetings.

RIGHT #9: BE INCLUDED IN TEAM MEETINGS

Be notified of scheduled meetings concerning the child and decisions made concerning the child. To have input concerning the plan of services for the child and to communicate with other professionals who work with the child.

Foster Parents as Critical Members of the Youth's Treatment Team. Foster parents are invited and expected to be present and to participate to provide input at the following:

- Court hearings – Service and Permanency Plans are discussed and Reviewed
- Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) - Service and Permanency Plans are discussed and Reviewed
- Quarterly Child and Family Team Meeting (it is during the CFTM's that any changes in the service plan and permanency goals are discussed)
- Education meetings
- Multidisciplinary team meetings and more!

Little City informs foster parents of their right to be informed of the decisions made by the court or LCF concerning the child; 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.

Little City values *foster parents as key members of the treatment team*; as such we ensure that all foster parents are invited and encouraged to participate in *all* treatment planning for youth in their care. As the primary caregivers of the youth served in LCF's program, foster parents offer a wealth of information about the youth and his/her needs that is essential to effective treatment planning. Therefore, Little City ensures timely notification of the dates and times of all court hearings, agency staffing's, CFTMs, ACRs, school meetings, and other meetings convened on behalf of a child by phone and in-person during 3x/monthly home visits. Written notification is provided via mailed letter or e-mail, or when staff provides CFTM minutes that are inclusive of all case planning and treatment information pertaining to the child. The GAL's office also sends written notification of all court hearings to foster parents and DCFS sends out invitations to foster parents for participation in the ACR staffing.

Case management and supervisory staff explain the purpose of the meetings and invite and encourage foster parent participation. If a foster parent is unable to attend in person, staff will work with the foster parent to call-in to the meeting, or to provide information prior to the meeting/court hearing to determine if there is information that the foster parent would like presented. Mutually agreed upon decisions made by team members are provided in writing after meetings and reflected within documentation completed by case managers such as the IA, Service Plan, CANS, Visitation Plans, CFTM minutes and case notes.

RIGHT #10: DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Foster parents have the right to be given - in a timely and consistent manner - any information a case worker 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.

- Pre-placement & On-going Information Sharing Procedures by Staff to Foster Parents
- Types of Information to Shared
- Building Connections, Engagement & Shared Parenting

When families are approached about a specific placement, all available behavioral and emotional concerns, educational accommodations, case goals, visitation arrangements, and any other child-specific information is shared verbally and in-writing with the family before placement is made for the family to assess fitness of the placement. Agency shares written copies of all essential information upon placement as well within the Child File. Confidential information specific to the birth family's background is not shared unless that information has an impact on the child's care, and consent is given. Agency procedures and the types of information shared has been extensively detailed in Narrative #7 and #8.

Little City's Family Needs Assessment, Child and Caregiver Matching Tool, Placement Paperwork and the Child File are reviewed and provided to foster parents prior to and upon placement. The child's portion of the Integrated Assessment (IA) and Service Plan, if available, are reviewed and provided upon placement, and foster parents are engaged in the treatment planning process throughout the life of the case. It is through the CFTM, ACR, Court and additional service planning processes that foster parents are informed about the permanency plan for a child.

Little City encourages birth parent and foster parent collaboration (and we provide reimbursement per DCFS Reunification Reimbursement schedule), per the foster parents' mutual agreement to engage in this process. Additionally, Little City always asks our foster parents if they are desirous of maintaining permanency for a child through adoption or guardianship (if eligible) if reunification is no longer possible. If the foster family is not desirous of meeting the court-set permanency goal for a child, Little City maintains the placement until a permanent placement is identified. Little City values relationships and seeks to maintain them in pursuit of the child's well-being and stability.

Benefits of Shared Parenting in Support of Permanency

- Empowers parents in their role as parents.
- Encourages parents to participate in identified activities.
- Caregivers can mentor parents in appropriate parenting practices.
- Parents support caregivers to ensure their children are well cared for.
- Children can maintain connections and have consistency in their lives.
- Creates partnership between parents and caregivers.
- If reunification is the goal, the lines of communication between the children, parents and caregiver can remain open, with continuing support and connection.
- If reunification is not possible, children can continue contact with parents.

CFS 1042 L Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee Log - The Reunification Support Special Service Fee is available to caregivers of children whose families are making progress toward reunification.

RIGHT #11: PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS

Receive written notice of any plans to end placement, along with the reason, and appeal information.

- Agency Procedures to Attain 90% Placement Stabilization
- Placement Disruptions Defined (2 Types)
- Service Appeal Procedures
- Maintaining ongoing connections and procedures for Successful Transitions

Little City strives to ensure continued placement stabilization within our foster care program. We have achieved an 85-90+% placement stability rate in 2021 by ensuring a thorough foster parent licensing and training process including conducting thorough home studies; having pre-placement and transition plans; reviewing the child's CANS, IA, and other background information prior to and on-going throughout placement; providing essential services and crisis support, and rigorously monitoring the case upon placement. However, Little City understands that circumstances may still arise resulting in a placement disruption per foster parent request and/or via the agency providing written notice (this latter instance is an uncommon agency practice.)

There are two types of disruptions:

- (1) Planned: Planned Disruptions occur when a caregiver gives a 30-day written notice on placement to Little City or when the agency decides to move a child to another home to achieve the child's permanency goal (An example of this is when a child moves from a foster home into the care of their birth parents to achieve their permanency goal of return home.). Little City asks for a 30-day notice on placement due to the specialized needs of youth served in the program. Little City attempts to move the child as soon as possible to ensure the child's best interests and to honor the foster parents' desires. In all circumstances, Little City attempts to move children when notice is received by following a mutually agreed upon transition plan into a new home. However, the program fully recognizes that certain circumstances warrant immediate placement moves and the program responds to foster parent's desires in this instance. Emergency moves are handled more on an exceptional basis versus a typical procedural basis.
- (2) Unplanned: Unplanned Disruptions occur when a child is assessed to be at immediate risk of harm and requires immediate removal to protect his/her safety. Licensing Investigations occur in response to these reports and there is a possibility of a Child Abuse/Neglect Investigation by DCFS' Division of Child Protection in applicable cases. These types of disruptions are also exceptional and uncommon within the program.

When Little City decides to move a youth in an unplanned way, Little City will give the foster parent a 14 Day Notice of Change (CFS 151-B) any time the agency makes the determination to move a child from a foster care placement for unplanned reasons. *Foster parents have a right to appeal this decision.* Prior to any issuance of a 14 day notice Little City Director, Supervisor, Case Manager, and if applicable the Therapist shall meet with the Foster Parent to discuss concerns and give the foster parent a chance to correct the concerns. Should there be no change to the concerns the 14 day notice will be given. Little City provides foster parents with documentation about the appeal process upon issuance of a 14 Day Notice. Additionally, LCF must send a notice to DCFS Clinical Placement Review Team and they will conduct a staffing within 10 days of receiving the notice. If it is determined that a foster child is at imminent risk of harm in a foster home or if there is a court order, the child will be removed immediately from that home and written notice may be waived.

Foster parents may also elect to file a service appeal. The service appeal process is a two-step process, mediation and an administrative fair hearing. Foster parents may file a service appeal when they are in disagreement with actions or decisions taken by Little City under the following circumstances:

- When decisions are made that directly affect you, such as payments to you for the child in your care for whom DCFS is legally responsible
- When decisions are made about services, such as day care, medical, educational, or psychological services, for the benefit of the child for whom the Department is legally responsible
- Agency failure to provide services as specified in the service plan for the benefit of the child.
- A change in the child's substitute care placement

Foster parents must request a service appeal within 10 days from receiving notice on a decision or action by Little City, which may result in stopping Little City from acting on its decision until such a time that the case has completed the service appeal process.

Written requests for a service appeal are sent to:

Administrative Hearings Unit
DCFS
17 N. State St 7th floor
Chicago, IL 60601

Anytime a placement disrupts, Little City promotes on-going contact and communication between the foster parent and minor by facilitating visitation and phone calls. With consent from the foster parents, Little City will provide the previous foster parent(s)' information to the new foster parent(s) in order for them to use one another for babysitting and/or respite. Additionally, in the event of planned disruptions, Little City develops a transition calendar for the youth to transition out of one foster parent home into another home. This allows foster parents to share information about the child and how to best meet his/her needs.

Foster parents receive training on transitions during Little City preservice training and as a part of the ongoing training offered (See attached training schedule.)

RIGHT #12: APPEAR AT COURT

Foster parents have the right to receive timely notification of court hearings.

- Agency's Procedure for Notifying and Inviting Foster Parents to all Court Hearings as Critical Members of the Youth's Team
- Juvenile Court Process Information Sharing Procedure

Little City foster parents note that they received timely notification of court hearings. Notification was provided verbally in-home visits and in-writing through e-mail and in CFTM minutes. Little City assures accountability for case managers informing foster parents about upcoming court hearings by providing supervision to case managers and attending CFTMs. Case managers document in the progress notes when notification is given to foster parents. Foster parents are provided with the date, time, location and purpose of the hearing in CFTM minutes. Copies of the biannual Integrated Assessment also indicate the dates of upcoming ACRs, court hearings, and concerns/progress related to the case that will be presented during these meetings. Foster parents are invited to attend the hearings and to report on the child's safety and well-being. They are especially encouraged to be present and heard during the following: change of goal or best interest hearings, trials, and termination. In the past, many foster parents remarked that attendance at Court hearings was a challenge due to the hearings being during the weekday hours when they are working. In instances when foster parents cannot attend, case managers provide an update post-Court via phone or in-person shortly after the hearing. *However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been more opportunities for foster parents to attend virtually.*

Little City provides a full explanation of the juvenile court process as part of the licensing process and ongoing through training. Court is discussed at the Foster Parent Implementation Plan Trainings. Foster parents are given a copy of the LCF Foster Parent Handbook, which covers explanations of administrative case reviews, service plans, and the role of foster parents in the court process. Court training is a component of LCF's Pre-Service Training as part of our Working as a Team training.

RIGHT #13: CONSIDERATION AS A PLACEMENT OPTION FOR FOSTER CHILDREN FORMERLY IN CARE

Foster parents have the right to be considered as a placement option for foster children formerly in their care.

- Agency Procedures for Maintaining Connections
- Agency Procedures for Making Placement Decisions

Little City has improved our engagement with foster parents who have youth stepped-up to residential in efforts to step that youth down to the same home when s/he is ready to be discharged to a less restrictive environment (such as a foster home). Program has noted increased foster parent engagement with the child, even if s/he does not return to the former foster home. This is a positive outcome for the youth, as s/he has added sustained relationships, social connections and support in his/her life.

Foster parents have the right to be considered as placement options for children formerly in their care. As such, Little City accesses a child's past placement information by reviewing the minor's placement information in SACWIS, requesting a copy of the CM-07 screen from DCFS, and/or by liaising with Little City's licensing department to ensure foster parents are contacted about their desire to accept the placement.

Little City makes all placement determinations considering the child's best interests, with preserving, promoting and maintaining relationships (including relationships with foster parents) as paramount among them. Best interest of the child includes a consideration of attachment; cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, economic and other demographic considerations; service needs; the child's desires; permanency goal; and so on. Case management staff liaise with the child's treatment team including his/her GAL, licensing staff, supervisor, therapist, biological family members, foster parents, and/or other members of the child's team to determine best interest considerations related to potential placement options for the minor. Upon determination, then the case manager, supervisor or licensing staff should contact possible foster care placement homes.

RIGHT #14: BE INFORMED ABOUT FILING AN APPEAL WITHOUT RETALIATION

Foster parents have the right to have access to an agency or DCFS' appeals process without retaliation.

- LCF's Grievance Procedure
- DCFS Appeal Procedure

Little City values, honors and respects our foster parents. Just the same, there will be times when LCF may make decisions that a foster family may not agree with, and there will definitely be times when we make mistakes. Little City informs and trains all foster parents about their appeal rights in pre-service and on-going trainings, and this domain is discussed in the Foster Parent Advisory Council Meetings. Written materials are provided in the Foster Parent Handbooks and Child Files upon the placement of a child. Each parent receives a copy of this plan, and the plan is always available on LCF's website, for review as well.

Little City's Internal Grievance or Appeal Process:

Foster parents can bring any complaint to our staff and receive fair treatment and a considerate response to the issue anytime by calling 773-265-1539. Sometimes, it is easier or more meaningful to write down what the problem is, and for that purpose we have a grievance form (See Attachment G). LCF will assign any grievances and begin investigating within one business day. Little City treats all grievances as confidential; therefore, the information shared is respected and action plans are mutually agreed upon by relevant parties requiring inclusion to resolve the complaint. Foster parents will not be subject to any form of retaliation for filing a complaint. Little City values our foster parents' voices and wants to honor you, while we also recognize that disagreements may occur, we are committed to coming to a mutually agreed upon solution.

Little City fully discloses, and trains foster parents on the appeal procedures during LCF pre-service training and by providing grievance and appeal information in written form via LCF's Foster Parent Handbook, Child Files, and through distribution of this plan.

External DCFS Service Appeal Process:

Foster parents can contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798 for assistance. Foster parents may file a Service Appeal with DCFS when they may have a difference of opinion than the case manager, the managing agency, and/or DCFS regarding an agency or DCFS decision or action on the child's case in your care.

The Service Appeal process is a two-step process and involves mediation and an administrative fair hearing. Both of these meetings provide foster parents an opportunity to share their opinions about what is in the child's best interest regarding his/her care with the hopes of creating a plan to resolve the issue(s). Little City disseminates information about DCFS' Service Appeal process in our pre-service training, brochures are available at the office and provided within the child files. The appeals process is also outlined on our website:

[Foster Care & Adoption - Little City](#)

Foster parents may appeal the agency's decision by contacting the following:

DCFS Administrative Hearings Unit
17 N. State St. 7th Floor.
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 814-5540

All appeals must be in writing, and must include:

- Your name
- Your address
- Your phone number
- The reason(s) for the appeal

DCFS's website has useful information about service appeals:

<http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/089003370000300r.html>

Foster parents are to be treated with dignity and respect when filing a service appeal. If a foster parent feels they are being retaliated against, they should report this to the caseworker's supervisor, program manager, and/or director. The Office of Affirmative Action can be contacted in cases of alleged discrimination.

RIGHT #15: CALL THE FOSTER PARENT HOTLINE

Foster parents have the right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and information on reporting staff misconduct.

- **OIG Complaints**
- **Foster Parent Hotline Advocacy Office**

Foster parents may elect to call the foster parent hotline or file a complaint with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), if they believe a Little City or Department employee, service provider or contractor may have violated their rights, or the rights of the children in their care. Examples include acts of abuse or neglect against a child, breaches of confidentiality, and the likes.

During the pre-service training, foster parents are informed about the Foster Parent Hotline and the Office of Inspector General. Little City will incorporate this information during our ongoing training and as handouts. The phone numbers are also listed in the Foster Parent Handbook given to families by DCFS at the time of licensure and listed on the DCFS website. Foster Parent Hotline and OIG brochures are available at the Little City office. Foster parents are periodically reminded of the services of these programs in the newsletter and postings will be added to Little City's website. In addition, any foster parent can contact any staff within the agency that will provide them with the phone numbers without any fear of retribution for exercising their rights.

Here is a DCFS link for the Office of Inspector General:

https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/OIG/Pages/com_communications_inspector.aspx

**Foster Parent Hotline:
1-800-232-3798 or
#1-217-524-2029**

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Your responsibilities are dictated by Illinois Law, Rule 340

<http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/089003400c00600r.html>

YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

1. <u>Communicate with Child's Team:</u> <i>Openly communicate and share information about the child with the child welfare team.</i>
2. <u>Respect Confidentiality:</u> <i>Respect the confidentiality of information about foster children and their families.</i>
3. <u>Be An Advocate:</u> <i>Advocate for children in their care.</i>
4. <u>Treat Child and Birth Family with Dignity and Respect:</u> <i>Treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration.</i>
5. <u>Recognize Your Own Strengths, Limitations and Need for Support:</u> <i>Recognize their own strengths, limitations and support needs when considering placement of a child.</i>
6. <u>Team with Other Foster Parents / Support Groups:</u> <i>Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent groups in improving the quality of care.</i>
7. <u>Assess Need for and Obtain Training:</u> <i>Assess their on-going individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.</i>
8. <u>Placement Stabilization:</u> <i>Develop and implement strategies to prevent placement disruptions, and to provide support if preventative strategies fail and disruption occurs.</i>
9. <u>Acknowledge and Minimize Stress:</u> <i>Know the impact that foster parenting has on individuals and the family and minimize associated stressors.</i>
10. <u>Promote the Foster Parenting Experience:</u> <i>Know the rewards and benefits of foster parenting and promote the experience in a positive way.</i>
11. <u>Know Everyone's Roles, Rights and Responsibilities:</u> <i>Know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other child welfare professionals, and the child and his/her family.</i>
12. <u>Serve as a Mandated Reporter:</u> <i>Know their role as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse/neglect. Know the policy regarding allegations against foster parents.</i>
13. <u>Know and Actively Participate in Administrative Case Reviews, Service Planning and Court:</u> <i>Understand the purpose of, and participate in, ACRs, service planning and court processes, according to their designated role.</i>
14. <u>Know Appeal Process:</u> <i>Know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and their rights.</i>
15. <u>Maintain Good Records:</u> <i>Maintain accurate and relevant records regarding the child's progress and history and follow agency procedures and regulations.</i>
16. <u>Share Information:</u> <i>Share information about the child's adjustment with a subsequent caregiver, whether it is the parent or another substitute caregiver.</i>

17. Support & Encourage Cultural Identity: *Respect and maintain a child's cultural needs and support relationships with his own family.*

RESPONSIBILITY #1: COMMUNICATION

Foster parents have the responsibility to openly communicate and share information about child(ren) in your care with other members of the child welfare team.

- Proactive Communication
- The Importance of Words and Language
- Ways and means, and Types of Communication
- Working as a Team

As a foster parent, you are a key member of the treatment team for the child in your care. As such, it is important to proactively communicate and recognize how other team members can help you and the child in your care succeed. Little City values the information and knowledge that our foster parents provide to us. LCF listens to what is communicated and provides follow-up.

Key area's of communication:

1. Referring to child as their child, using Youth in Care instead of Ward of the state.
2. Agency communication regarding staff changes so that Foster Parent can address the youth in their home.

Little City program staff notify families of their departure directly in planned circumstances; in unplanned circumstances such as a position elimination or termination, the supervisor is required to communicate the change. The agency will send out written communication in the event of position eliminations.

Foster parents preferred method to receive information can be via text, phone, or e-mail, or written communication via mail. Agency discussed their procedures for information sharing and foster parents agreed that they received agency communication timely, and that communication was multifaceted.

Learning to work as a team is key to having open communication. On-going training provides specific information about the type of information to share, and all the avenues in which to share it.

Little City Foundation also provides a written contract that is signed upon placement of a child, including a Therapy Service Agreement Contract. The placement contract communicates to the foster parent Little City Foundation's expectations for working together as a team to meet the needs of the child and family. Bi-annual licensing and monitoring visits reviews the expectation to communicate openly as a team member.

COVID 19 has presented Little City Foster Parents with the task of a lifetime, fostering during a Pandemic. It is so important to communicate with your team and equally important for the Little City team to communicate with you about updates to DCFS and IDPH response to the pandemic. Communication around the youth's needs, foster family needs will be key in working through this time.

Little City will keep you updated as to possible exposure, and it is important that you communicate with the team any exposure to COVID 19 that the family may experience. Little City will continue to follow CDC guidelines as it relates to COVID 19.

RESPONSIBILITY #2: RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

Foster parents have the responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.

- Confidentiality Defined
- Foster Parent Training and Resources on Confidentiality
- Staff Training on Confidentiality

Foster parents remarked on the importance of confidentiality in the Advisory Council meetings. It is clear to program that foster parents understand the concept of confidentiality and the importance of maintaining it. Foster parents noted that they typically share information when advocating for services on behalf of a youth in their care, which is appropriate.

It is important that foster parents recognize that, as members of the foster care team, they are bound by the rule of confidentiality. In order to inform foster parents of this responsibility the Statement of Confidentiality is reviewed during initial licensing process and ongoing during semiannual license monitoring. Foster parents are asked to sign the statement for maintenance within the licensing file. The statement includes information regarding the need to maintain confidentiality and the method by which information should be shared with relevant professionals when necessary to service provision.

Prospective foster parents are informed in orientation that members of the foster care staff may share sensitive, personal information regarding the child, his or her history, reason for coming into care, and progress of the birth family with foster parents. It is at this time that foster parents are introduced to the concept of confidentiality. As families are licensed, the licensing worker will review the confidentiality agreement and they sign a copy of the agreement which is then placed in their licensing file. Confidentiality is also discussed during DCFS' Pride Training and by Little City during Pre Service Training. The LCF Foster Parent Handbook further provides guidelines for sharing confidential information and keeping records regarding the child and the biological family confidential. Little City's licensing staff discusses confidentiality with foster parents as required by Licensing Standard: "Section 402.24 Confidentiality of Information," during their initial licensing visits, every six months during monitoring visits, and at renewal. Confidentiality is also reviewed when a staff member feels it is appropriate to the situation.

The staff is educated in this information during monthly supervision, department, and team meetings. Staff review and sign an acknowledgement of reading the Child Welfare Professionals Code of Ethics (that includes confidentiality expectations) and sign a confidentiality statement for their personnel files.

RESPONSIBILITY #3: BE AN ADVOCATE

A primary responsibility of foster parents is to advocate for the children in your care.

- Foster Parents are Critical Advocates for Youth in Care
- Foster Parent Training on ways and means to Advocate
- Service Appeals

As key members of a child's treatment team, foster parents receive information and training on how to best advocate for the child(ren) in their care. As a part of the ongoing training, we offer here at Little City will enroll parents into DCFS Educational Advocacy Training. Little City and DCFS are providing virtual and on demand training to foster parents. It should be noted that Little City on demand training is limited but we are working on building this area up for the future.

LCF's ongoing monthly training calendar LCF's pre-service and on-going foster parent training, the LCF Foster Parent Handbook, placement paperwork and the Child File all provide information specifically on advocacy in the domains of education, court, ACRs, medical, and the likes. For example, LCF's placement contract outlines the foster parent's responsibility to advocate for the child in their care in medical and educational settings and outlines that advocacy also includes maintaining their knowledge of the foster child's culture, religious beliefs, family situation and mental health/health needs. Foster parents sign the agreement at the time of placement and annually thereafter.

Foster parents are valued members of the child's treatment team, and as such, they are invited and asked to participate in team meetings related to the child in his/her care. These meetings include ACRs, CIPPs, Court hearings, CFTMs, educational meetings, and more. Case managers notify and invite foster parents to meetings by telephone, e-mail and in-person during 3x/monthly home visits. Case managers document in their progress notes when notification is given to foster parents. Foster parents are also provided with the date, time, location, and purpose of the meeting in CFTM minutes and by invitation letters sent by GALs. Copies of the biannual Integrated Assessment and Service Plans also indicate the dates of upcoming ACRs, court hearings, and concerns/progress related to the case that will be presented during these meetings. Foster parents are invited to attend the hearings and to report on the child's safety and well-being. If foster parents are unable to attend in person, LCF makes accommodation for a telephone call-in, or gathers information to share verbally or in-writing at the meetings.

**Covid 19 Pandemic has also opened more virtual avenues to attend meetings such as Zoom and Teams, for the continued safety of all participants.*

Foster parents are further informed that through the service appeal process they can advocate for the needs of the child in their care that they do not believe are being addressed. Little City keeps service appeal brochures in the office and provides them to all families as part of our pre-service training within the LCF Foster Parent Handbook. Families also have access to the Advocacy Office phone number through the LCF Foster Parent Handbook or by calling the agency.

RESPONSIBILITY #4: TREAT OTHERS WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

Foster parents have the responsibility to treat children in their care, their birth families, and members of the child's treatment team with dignity, respect, and consideration.

- Shared Parenting
- Agency Staff Responsibility for Ensuring Dignity and Respect
- Grievance Procedure

Foster Parents also talked at length about the importance of discussing a child's biological family, and engaging with biological parents, with respect. Foster parents talked about how they use life books, share pictures, Face Time or Skype, have discussions around visits (and occasionally host parent-child visits), and more. Foster parents all agreed that providing food and engaging in customs aligned with the child's background and/or familial preference was key to the youth's adjustment in their home. Program was pleased with the level of openness, acceptance and support our foster parents provided in this domain.

SHARED PARENTING: Little City staff are trained in parent engagement and the idea of shared parenting to enhance agency efforts towards reunification and immediate and extended family connections. Agency's New Employee Manual orients and trains all staff within 90 days of hire and ongoing in team meetings and supervision about the importance of family-centered and strengths-based practice. Agency uses the Strengthening Families Protective Factors as a common language in working with families. Foster Parents who have successfully helped a youth reunify and /or engage with their family of origin and agency case managers co-train training for prospective and licensed parents about this topic

Little City discusses this responsibility in our pre-service and on-going monthly foster parent training (see attachment.) Several of our training courses specifically address the expectation that foster parents will treat children in their care, their birth families, and members of the child's treatment team with dignity, respect, and consideration. DCFS' PRIDE and on-going training addresses this responsibility as well. The responsibility to treat children in their care, their birth families, and members of the child's treatment team with dignity, respect and consideration is reviewed during the foster family licensing process and on-going through licensing visits, home visits and CFTMs.

Case management staff and his/her supervisor are responsible for ensuring children, their birth families, and members of the child's treatment team are treated with dignity, respect, and consideration. Adherence to this should be documented within SACWIS case notes, which are monitored monthly by supervisors and quality assurance staff, and within CFTM minutes, IAs, Service Plans, and/or Court reports as applicable/appropriate.

Concerns related to this area should be addressed directly by the case worker with the foster parent during a home visit. The case manager may solicit the assistance of his/her supervisor if violating this criterion was an on-going issue, and/or report the concern to licensing. Little City is desirous of resolving all concerns in a timely, respectful manner by following appropriate policies and procedures.

RESPONSIBILITY #5: RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND NEED FOR SUPPORT

Foster parents have the responsibility to recognize your own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into your home; and the responsibility to recognize your own support needs and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.

- Little City’s On-going Mutual Assessment Process
- CFTMs and Licensing Visits and Support as On-going Assessment Tool
- Support Services
- Support Groups

This domain was discussed at length with foster parents this year during the Foster Parent Implementation Trainings and Advisory Council Meetings. Foster parents commented that they agreed whole-heartedly with recognizing one’s own strengths, limitations, and needs for support as key to providing good care to one’s self, a youth in care, and one’s own family. The staff and foster parents talked about different scenarios when recognition of these areas came into play, and discussed solutions. The team agreed upon the importance of saying “No”

Little City’s on-going mutual assessment method related to assessing familial strengths and needs involves the following:

- The licensing and home study process comprehensively assesses each family’s strengths and needs as a foster parent. Part of this process is to discuss and assess the foster parents’ strengths in determining the best possible match for the placement of a child in the home using the Child Caregiver Matching Tool and conducting extensive interviews. Extensive discussion about what the foster parent learned in DCFS’ PRIDE training, Little City’s Pre-service training, and through their 10 hours of hands-on volunteering within our foster care program with youth currently served is also used to guide placement decisions and determine training needs. The Licensing Representative speaks to every member of the home (including children) to determine that the entire family is supportive of fostering. Any information obtained from individual family members is discussed with the applicants prior to licensure.

During the licensing and home study assessment process, the potential outcomes of the mutual assessment process include:

- LCF and the foster family make a mutual decision to select the family into the program as a licensed foster parent;
- LCF and the family make a mutual decision to select the family out of the program (LCF will refer the foster family to another agency better matched with their placement desires and individual desires);

After receiving a license to become a foster parent, Little City’s licensing staff monitors the home within 60 days of issuing a license, and every six months thereafter at a minimum. During these contacts, Little City’s Licensing Representative reviews completed trainings and discuss recommendations for future trainings. Little City enrolls foster parents into 16 hours of annual training at the agency based upon the mutual assessment of needs. Little City trainings are open to all foster parents. Little City licensing workers are tasked with contacting their foster homes to enroll them in training for the year based on the foster parent’s feedback and interest in training being offered.

Child and Family Team meetings are held quarterly to discuss the child's needs and family's ability to meet those needs. Additional trainings are identified in these meetings with the foster parent and added as tasks to the service plan if necessary. Little City helps foster parents secure these trainings outside of the agency if not being offered internally.

Little City engages foster parents in discussions of their natural support networks including family, friends, church, or other support systems during the home study process and on-going in CFTMs and home visits. Case management and licensing staff provide support resources like a support group, LCF's foster parent to foster parent mentoring support, or direct a parent to a foster parent advisory board or other resource if deemed helpful by the family.

Little City also offers foster parents an array of individualized support services to meet the needs of the child and his/her foster family. Little City provides weekly, in-home therapy; respite services; mentoring; and other services as identified by the child's treatment team to support the foster parent. Therapists provide training, in-home therapy support and 24/7 on-call support. Respite is also provided to provide foster parents with a break in order to maintain a high quality of care for children in placement. Little City also provides mentoring opportunities to offer foster parents a break while providing therapeutic opportunities for the child.

COVID 19 Pandemic has shined a light on the need to be able to recognize your own strengths, limitations and need for support. It is crucial that you stay in tune with how the pandemic has and is affecting everyday life for you and your family. Challenges of daily living activities, such as e-Learning for the youth, takes its toll. We are here to help and provide necessary resources to help you and help the youth in your care. Please see Right # 3 for a list of supports geared toward helping youth. Please, reach out to other foster parents, family and friend for support. Reach out to your case manager, licensing representative and Little City management team for additional support. We are here to assist, where we can, and provide resources and supports.

Additional support groups available to foster parents, and regularly shared with Little City's foster parents for their involvement are here:

- Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council
- Circle of Parents, 5440 S. Racine, contact: Stacey Saffold, #773.419.4660
- Cook Central DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council, DCFS 1701 First Ave, Maywood, IL, Contact Denise Spires, #708.338.6739
- Cook North DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council, DCFS Office 1911 S Indiana Ave, Chicago, IL, #773-808-5000
- Cook South and South Suburban Regional DCFS Foster Parent Advisory Council, Contact Angela Barber, #773.371.6444

RESPONSIBILITY #6: TEAM WITH OTHER FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parents have the responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other parents and foster parents—and/or foster parent associations—in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.

- Opportunities for Connections with Other Foster Parents – Training, Appreciation, Recognition
- Foster Parent Advisory Councils – LCF and DCFS

Training provides our foster parents with an opportunity to network and connect. We continue to offer monthly trainings (aka “Training Tuesdays”) *via video/virtual trainings*. Little City’s “Keeping It Real” training is fully led by foster parents to provide real life experiences of foster parenting to prospective families (see Training attachment for more information.) Please refer to FY21 Training schedule for new Training rollout.

Little City also sponsors two engagement, recognition, and networking events each year: our Annual Picnic (June) and Annual Holiday Party (December). Foster parents also connect through Little City’s Foster Care Facebook page where stories, resources, and information is shared.

In April 2021 the Foster Parent Appreciation was held virtually, the annual Picnic was rescheduled to August and was held in person at the Dan Ryan Woods with plenty of space for appropriate social distancing. Little City will continue to follow CDC Guidelines as it relates to COVID 19. There was a good response to coming back together in person in an appropriate socially distance event. Due to continued concerns the December Holiday Party will be virtual again. We are looking forward to 2023 to be back in person for the Annual Holiday Party.

Little City encourages our families to begin cluster support groups in their area with other local foster parents by facilitating a Foster Parent to Foster Parent Mentoring Network. Agency staff is willing to come to these meetings to facilitate discussions if requested. To date, several foster parents utilize each other for support and respite, but there are no formal support group meetings. Foster parents are also encouraged to seek support from other families by joining support groups.

Foster Care Associations, Advisory Councils and Useful Resource Links:

<http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/links.html>

Resources for support were notated in Narrative #6 above.

RESPONSIBILITY #7: PARTICIPATE IN ONGOING TRAINING

Foster parents have the responsibility to assess individual, ongoing training needs and to take action to meet those needs.

- LCF Training
- DCFS and Community-Based Trainings

Little City conducted 118 hours of training for our foster parents in 2021 virtually, and a few in person for CPR at our office. *As we continue to make our way through the Pandemic Little City will continue to offer training virtually and some in person that will follow CDC guidelines and the American Heart association Guidelines for CPR. Virtual access has increased participation for foster parents. We will continue this delivery of training into 2023.*

Little City's Training's have and will continue to be developed in collaboration with foster parents, staff and in a direct response to feedback received from the Training Needs Assessment Survey conducted by Little City staff, on Training Evaluation Forms, monthly Licensing Questionnaires, and during visits about needed trainings. The 2023 Training Curriculum continues to provide trainings that provide foster parents with more "tools for their toolbox" in working with youth's challenging behaviors, with a focus on trauma.

In 2021 ARC Reflections training curriculum was our primary focus. Moving into 2023, ARC Reflections will be offered as a Specialty training in 2023.

See Attachment A for full list of Trainings in 2023

Families are informed of DCFS's Virtual Training Center and their ability to register for an account. The Virtual Training Center allows families to register themselves for training and to take online trainings as well. The agency provides other relevant community-based training information to families via mass mailings and posting information on our social media channels.

RESPONSIBILITY #8: PLACEMENT STABILIZATION

Placement stabilization includes the responsibility to develop and assist in implementation strategies to prevent placement disruptions and recognize the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family.

- Mutual Responsibility to Ensure Stable Placements
- Individual Crisis Management Plans (ICMP) and 24/7 On Call
- Transitioning Youth Effectively During a Disruption

Little City staff and foster parents continue to share a mutual responsibility to ensure the stability of a child in placement by assessing the child's safety and well-being needs on an on-going basis. At the forefront, Little City ensures careful assessment of the foster parent's strengths and desire for placements to ensure a careful match. Prior to placement and on-going throughout placement, the child's case management team is responsible for sharing information related to the child and his/her emotional/behavioral/mental health needs with the foster parent, just as the foster parent is responsible for sharing their assessment of the child's on-going needs, during CFTMs and home visits. Foster parents are expected to engage with a child's in-home therapist in order to best understand the child's needs and how to meet those needs.

Little City has also put into practice the need for each youth to have an Individual Crisis Management Plan. The plan provides foster parents with tools and information about the child in their care and how to identify triggers that lead to crisis. The ICMP when utilized in conjunction with other supports, helps the team to identify potential placement disruptions with the family and stabilize placement for the youth. Little City convenes team meetings immediately upon becoming aware of potential placement disruptions. Team members that may include case managers, therapists and foster parents will develop mutually agreed upon action plans to monitor and address a child's care needs in the home environment to prevent disruption.

Little City offers placement stabilization services internally by offering a 24/7 on-call system that includes access to the case management team, therapists, and supervisors. Little City's specialized foster care program offers individualized stabilization services based upon the needs of the child and his/her family that may include increased visits by the case manager, program therapist, ***Mental Health Professional (New Title 2021) this new title replaces the Placement Stabilization worker***, and/or mentor; increased respite including weekend respite with other foster parents; and team meetings. Little City's on-call staff will work alongside the foster parent in the event of a crisis, including a placement disruption. Staff will aid in calling SASS, the police or alerting other professionals if needed to stabilize a crisis.

IPS services are available to those foster families serving minors on Little City's traditional contract. The IPS agency can provide stabilization services for 60-90 days depending on case need.

Little City trains foster parents about stabilization services available to them in our pre-service training and in ongoing training. Information is also provided in the LCF Foster Parent Handbook and Child Files, and placement paperwork provided upon the placement of a child into the home.

If preventative measures fail and a placement disrupts, Little City will work with the foster parent to develop a transition plan (if immediate removal is not required due to a child's safety risk) or discuss the ways to best support the minor once s/he leaves the foster parent home. Little City's "Transitions" training specifically addresses how to manage an array of transitions for youth in care, including moving into a new foster home and leaving a foster home.

RESPONSIBILITY #9: UNDERSTAND THE FAMILY IMPACT of FOSTER PARENTING

Foster parents have the responsibility to assess the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to work to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.

- **LCF Orientation, Training and Procedures for Relaying the Importance of this Domain**
- **Support Services – including Respite – to Support Foster Parents and Minimize Stress**

Foster parents and staff discussed this domain as tied to Responsibility #5, Recognizing one’s own strengths, limitations and need for support at length, as a detailed above.

From the initial contact between potential foster parents and Little City, foster parents are apprised of the significant requirements of fostering children with intellectual, developmental and/or emotional/behavioral disabilities and the impact this has on one’s own family system. As part of LCF’s licensing process, pre-service training and ongoing training, foster parents are made aware of the impact fostering will have on the foster family, in terms of time, energy and levels of stress and/or frustration. Possible and observed stressors, and tactics to minimize stress, are a component of our pre-service and on-going trainings. These areas are further assessed during the home study assessment process. The on-going impact of foster parenting on family relationships is assessed through bi-annual licensing visits, 3x/month home visits, 1x/week in-home therapy sessions, quarterly CFTMs, bi-annual Court and ACR hearings, and at monthly LCF trainings. If a need for further support is identified, Little City convenes a team meeting including the foster parent/family and devises an appropriate intervention plan.

Little City makes every effort to minimize stress associated with foster parenting by providing support and support services as outlined in Narrative #3 (Rights) and Narrative #5, #6 (Responsibilities.) Support services are increased or adjusted in times of crisis or instability to offer our foster parents and their families’ added support and to minimize stress.

- **Little City provides Respite support for families a minimum of 15 hours/month, plus added funds in support of more respite hours if needed. Little City will assist in locating another foster family to provide Respite as needed and when the families own Respite Provider is unavailable.**

If a family wishes to take a voluntary break from fostering, the family has the option to place themselves on hold in two ways:

1. Verbally notifying the agency of their desire to be “on hold,” which will result in being removed from the list of homes LCF is actively matching for placement with
2. By electing into “Inactive Status,” which entails working with LCF’s licensing representative to complete needed sign-off forms that are maintained in the licensing file.

In both circumstances, the agency will continue to engage with the family. Of note, families who are not actively fostering or seeking a placement will need to maintain their training hours in order to be eligible for renewal of their license and for future placements. Foster families may choose to reengage in the fostering experience at any time.

RESPONSIBILITY #10: PROMOTE THE FOSTER PARENTING EXPERIENCE

Foster parents have the responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families and society that come from foster parenting and promote the foster parenting experience in a positive way.

- Current Foster Parents as Critical Recruiters
- Engagement Efforts with Foster Parents in Recruitment
- Retention and Recognition of Foster Parents by LCF

Little City believes that the most effective recruitment tool that we have is our current foster parents. Little City has successfully engaged an increased number of our currently licensed foster parents (approximately 60) and in FY21, we licensed 8 new homes. We are continuing to successfully sustain and grow our pool of foster parents through these ways:

- We also provide our foster parents with the platform to shine by co-training LCF pre-service and on-going foster parent training. The Keeping It Real course of LCF pre-service is fully led by foster parents to provide a real insight into foster parenting from foster parents' perspectives.
- Little City awarded \$500 in recruitment bonuses and gift cards to foster parents who referred prospective foster parents to Little City's informational orientation sessions and/or who became licensed as foster parents.
- Foster Parent Recognition and Appreciation April 21, 2021 occurred through a virtual engagement event. Prior to the event, programs were mailed out in addition to small gifts and certificates. The event featured recognition of years of service, singing, and remarks of appreciation. Families were also encouraged to utilize yard signs that read "Foster Parents are the Key to success"
- This Fall, the program received donations from *Cakes 4 Kids* to provide our youth with a birthday cake and or cupcakes. *Sharing Cousins* has provided Birthday Boxes. LCF received in 2021 a donation specifically to help with recruitment efforts which help to pay for community engagement activities such as "*Little City Open House*", *to engage current foster parent for continued connections and to recruit new Foster Parent* at a community venue.
- Program is hosting an Annual Holiday Party (December 2021) through a string of virtual activities to engage our youth and their families, as well as providing all families with gifts, activity kits and food gift cards.
- Foster Parents have volunteered to be a part of marketing and media materials distributed at the Holidays and quarterly as part of the agency's strategic plan.
- Little City has a "big check" and takes a picture of the referring foster parent and the newly licensed foster parent every time a \$500 referral bonus is paid out. The photo is distributed on our website, Facebook page, and to foster parents via newsletter and email.
- Our foster families co-trained pre-service training for new foster parents and some on-going training.

- Program generates a Quarterly Newsletter where Recruitment initiatives are shared, families highlighted, and gift card and bonus winners are announced. Regular e-mails will also highlight foster parent success stories.
- Disseminating foster care success stories on our foster care website: <https://r57j-wkdd.accessdomain.com/category/success-stories/>
- Foster Care Facebook page (with 6,466 “Likes” and 6,409 “Followers”) <https://www.facebook.com/LittleCityFosterCare> shares success stories from our program, resources for foster parents, all of our training information, and special events, including recruitment opportunities like our orientation sessions;
- Little City has a Twitter account with 174 followers (<https://twitter.com/LCFFosterCare>).
- Instagram has been created with a video “I am a Foster Parent” videos currently this account has 131 followers (<http://instagram.com/littlecityfostercare>)
- Little City created a 3 minute and 1 minute video along with our foster families and youth highlighting the benefits of fostering. The video was shared with all our foster families and our networks, and it is currently hosted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZPGcHf9T3E> and continuously on our website. We have provided our foster families with DVDs to view and share, and we pass out DVDs at recruitment events; This video is also used as a part of our orientation curriculum held monthly and is frequently featured on our social media outlets.
- Little City utilized the localization service offered by AdoptUSKids and the AdCouncil, created a localized “You don’t have to be perfect to be a perfect parent” adoption commercial. It is currently available on YouTube (at <https://youtu.be/OV2i48scRqg>) and is frequently featured on our social media.

Little City has made a significant investment in recruiting new families, continuously engaging our current families as key to that strategy. We are so appreciative of our current foster parent’s teamwork in this domain! We have seen the rewards of our investment through increased referrals of prospective foster parents from our currently licensed families who become licensed foster parents.

RESPONSIBILITY #11: KNOW THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES of CHILD WELFARE TEAM MEMBERS

Foster parents have the responsibility to know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other child welfare professionals, the child, and the child's birth family.

- LCF Procedures to Ensure Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities
 - CFTMs
 - Critical Members of the Treatment Team
 - Satisfaction Surveys
 - Foster Parent Advisory Council

These materials speak to the roles, rights and responsibilities of those fostering and child welfare team members: Foster parents are provided with program procedures in the LCF Foster Parent Handbook, co-training opportunities (specifically the “Working as a Team” and “Keeping It Real” Trainings - See attachments), the Little City placement contract; and print and social media updates.

Quarterly CFTMs with the child's treatment team provides a review of team member roles and responsibilities regarding the care of the child. This allows everyone involved an opportunity to meet as a team and work collectively on goals. Foster parents are also invited and encourage to participate in ACRs, Court, court family conferences, mediations, CIPPs, educational meetings, and other staffing's pertaining to the care of the child.

Little City includes foster parents as members of the management team in a multitude of ways including:

- Foster parent feedback is also solicited by conducting yearly satisfaction surveys. The outcomes from these surveys are used to improve the services provided by Little City's foster care program.
- Foster parents are also invited to be members of Little City's Foster Parent Advisory Committee, who aids in the development of our annual Foster Parent Implementation Plan. The committee includes staff from all levels of the agency.
- Foster parents are invited to co-train trainings with our therapy and case management team members.
- Foster parents and team members from all levels within the organization participate in our annual holiday party and summer picnic.

RESPONSIBILITY #12: SERVE AS A MANDATED REPORTER

Foster parents have the responsibility to know and, as necessary, serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

- LCF Expectation and Procedure for Foster Parents Outline
- Mandated Reporter Training
- Action Steps when a Hotline Call is Made

As a foster parent, you are a MANDATED REPORTER. Foster parents are required by law to report any abuse or neglect. This includes reporting any suspicions of abuse or neglect, even if one is unsure that the action was abuse or neglect. Foster parents must also report any failures of others to report abuse or neglect of which they have knowledge.

Little City's mandated reporter procedure is as follows: Upon witnessing, gaining knowledge of, or suspecting a case of abuse or neglect, including sexual acting-out and/or abuse, the foster parent will immediately report the information to the DCFS hotline by calling **1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)** and then to his/her case manager or their supervisor. The report will be made verbally and documented in writing. The written report must contain information from the hotline call, including the date, time, and name of the contact person on the hotline. The case manager or supervisor will notify the Director of Foster Care and Adoption of the program. The Director of Foster Care and Adoption will insure that DCFS is informed and all the proper paperwork is completed. If necessary, an investigation will be conducted by Little City and/or DCFS. When the investigation has been completed, the foster parents will be notified that action has been taken. In the event that the foster parent suspects Little City staff of abuse or neglect, the foster parent should contact the Director of the Foster Care Program, who will ensure that an investigation is conducted and that DCFS is informed.

LCF provides Mandated Reporter training during pre-service and on-going through in-class sessions at the agency or via DCFS' online training www.dcfstraining.org Foster parents are asked to sign an "Acknowledgment of Mandated Status Reporter" (CANTS 22) indicating their understanding and agreement with the rules of mandated reporting. This form is updated per initial licensing and renewal cycles.

Foster families who have had abuse/neglect allegations made against them are informed by the worker or the therapist that a call has been made to the hotline and the allegation made about the home. During pre-service training, families are informed of the possibility that a child may make an allegation of abuse or neglect about a family member that per mandated reporter responsibilities the agency/foster parent must report and the procedures for managing these reports. In addition, the LCF Foster Parent Handbook offers a section for foster parents about their rights if they are a subject of an abuse/neglect investigation. Foster children in the home who can be maintained through the investigation with a safety plan will remain in the home as long as the agency and DCP (if call is accepted) determine that the children's safety can be maintained through the documented plan.

RESPONSIBILITY #13: ADMINISTRATIVE CASE REVIEWS AND COURT HEARINGS

Foster parents need to know the purpose of administrative case reviews (ACR), client service plans and court processes, as well as any filing or time requirements associated with those proceedings; and have the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.

- Training Provided to Foster Parents about Purpose of ACR and Court
- Information Sharing and CFTMs to Ensure Attendance at ACR and Court

Foster parents reported understanding the purpose of ACRs and Court but having difficulty attending these proceedings regularly due to them occurring during typical business hours when many foster parents working. Little City makes accommodations by providing call-in options and/or soliciting their feedback to incorporate into reports to the Court and case file.

Little City staff explains the purpose of ACR and Court Hearings in these ways outlined below to promote engagement and attendance:

- At trainings
- During 3x/month home visits
- At quarterly CFTMs (written minutes include ACR/Court date, time, location, and purpose)
- The LCF Foster Parent Handbook provided during LCF pre-service
- Foster parents are interviewed during home and licensing visits and their information, concerns, strengths and areas for improvement are added into the biannual Integrated Assessment and Service Plan.

Both DCFS and Juvenile Court Have now gone to a virtual format for Foster Parent participation in these types of meetings and court hearing which allows for more participation by foster parents.

RESPONSIBILITY #14: KNOW APPEALS

Foster parents have the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and their rights.

- LCF Appeal Procedures
- DCFS Appeal Procedures

Foster parents are informed of their rights during the licensure period by reviewing and signing off on the "Foster Parents' Rights Statement," which is maintained in their licensing file and within the LCF Foster Parent Handbook. LCF provides pre-service and on-going training related to foster parents' rights. LCF also provides parents with the Foster Parent Implementation Plans annually that includes foster parents' rights (the plan is also maintained at [Foster Care & Adoption - Little City](#))

Little City's Internal Appeals Process entails the following:

Foster parents are welcomed to bring any complaint to any LCF staff member at any time by calling (773) 265-1539 during business hours or (847) 358-5510 to be connected to an on-call staff after hours, or by filling-out the Grievance Form in writing (see Attachment G.) Foster parents are provided with LCF's staff phone list that includes cell phone contact numbers for utilization at any time.

Foster parents will receive fair treatment and considerate response to the complaint. We will assign any grievances and begin investigating within 1 business day. Little City treats all grievances as confidential; therefore, the information shared is respected and action plans are mutually-agreed upon by relevant parties requiring inclusion to resolve the complaint. Foster parents will not be subject to any form of retaliation for filing a complaint. Little City values our foster parents' voices and wants to honor you, while we also recognize that disagreements may occur, we are committed to coming to a mutually-agreed upon solution.

If at any time a foster parent feels that Little City has not resolved their concern, the foster parent may file a service appeal with DCFS or call the Foster Parent Advocacy Office (See Right #15).

DCFS Appeals Procedures:

Little City provides DCFS Appeal procedures in the LCF Foster Parent Handbook during pre-service training; upon placement in the Child Files; and maintains copies of the brochures at the office.

RESPONSIBILITY #15: KEEP GOOD RECORDS

Foster parents have the responsibility to maintain accurate and relevant records, regarding the child's medication, medical visits, history and progress, along with the responsibility to follow the procedures for record keeping.

- LCF provides Child Files to Maintain Good Records
- Details Regarding Types of Records to Maintain

Foster parents acknowledged the importance of maintaining good records as a tool to advocating and supporting the youth in their care. Parents shared various ways and means that they kept records, such as having a designated binder or filing cabinet, and the ways/means for distributing the information to the youth's team, such as scan/email; fax; during visits; mail; and more. It is clear that Little City's foster parents do an excellent job in this domain.

Little City reviews and trains all foster parents on their responsibility to maintain records relevant to the youth in their care during our ongoing, pre-service training and licensure process. Foster parents are provided a LCF Foster Parent Handbook that further details the type of information to be maintained. Upon placement, foster parents are issued a Child File that provides a place to maintain all records, with section dividers by content area (ex: school, medical, behavioral, visitation, service planning, etc.) Little City's Foster Parent Placement Contract is also reviewed and signed-off on upon the placement of a child into a foster home that states the foster parent is responsible for maintaining all records for a child. Licensing Standard Section 402.26 "Records to be maintained" is reviewed with foster parents during the initial licensure, at renewals, and at six month monitoring visits.

The records to be maintained by the foster family shall include:

- The name and date of birth of the child, the legal guardian of the child, religion of the child, and arrangements for education of the child;
- The name, address, and telephone number of the child's physician, guardian, and supervising agency;
- The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of person to contact in case of emergency, including the names of persons to whom the child may be released;
- A record and/or receipts for distribution of allowance and clothing funds;
- A record of the emergency evacuation plan and quarterly rehearsals;
- The CFS 592 Overnight Visit Arrangements, kept for the duration of the visit;
- The CFS 432 Consent for Out of State Travel or Extended Trips;
- Completed medical, dental, vision, hearing and other specialty appointments; immunizations the child has received; any physical problems, limitations, or allergies the child has; any current recommendations for special medical care; log of medication prescribed and given; and all medical-related consents.
- Copies of child's school records: report card, disciplinary notices, progress reports, meeting notices, Individualized Education Plan
- Copies of evaluations completed (psychological, psychiatric, developmental, etc.)
- Records of completed foster parent training and all relevant 402 documentation
- Sibling and Biological Parent visitation forms

Foster Parent Responsibilities to the children they serve are to ensure that they receive annual physicals including updating immunizations as required by the state of Illinois, Dentals, Vision Screening, and Hearing. The importance of this well-being measure was acknowledged and recognized by DCFS and is being monitored by DCFS monthly in 2020/2021; Little City tracks compliance monthly and provides reports.

RESPONSIBILITY #16: SHARE INFORMATION

Foster parents have 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.

- Sharing of Information Pre-Placement
- Sharing of Information Upon Placement and Ongoing During Placement

Foster parents and staff discussed this domain, and mutually agreed that sharing information is essential to ensuring the well-being of the youth in their care. Foster parents talked about sharing information with case managers during visits, in a crisis via phone or after-hours; with therapists during their weekly in-home visits; with support staff during their visits; and with supervisors and other team members during CFTMs, licensing visits, and the likes.

Little City staff meet with a foster parent to discuss the child's needs related to placement considerations. Staff uses LCF forms to gather information pertaining to the child's needs, culture, schedule, likes and dislikes, services, triggers for negative behavioral interactions, and so on. The Child File and life book are also expected to follow the child to any subsequent placement and contains the foster parent's notes regarding the child's special needs.

The pre-placement visits also serve as a time for the caregivers and staff to discuss the child's adjustment. Staff therapists are also involved at this time, as necessary, to assess or share information regarding the child's adjustment. We have a placement checklist to ensure all the required tasks and paperwork are completed at placement. Little City also has a thirty-day staffing after the placement to assess the placement and child's adjustment that includes the former foster caregiver.

Families who transition a child for a more permanent placement or for families who did not have concerns regarding care of the children are encouraged to remain a support in the child's life and for the new foster family. The agency counsels the foster family after the child has moved on ways the family can remain involved in the child's life (respite provider, phone calls, etc.)

Little City trains foster parents on the importance of sharing information and being an active member of the child's treatment team during the "Working as a Team, Foster Parent Implementation Plan" and "Keeping It Real: Foster Parenting from a Foster Parents' Perspective" trainings of our pre-service. The importance of sharing information is reiterated at home visits and CFTMs on an ongoing basis.

RESPONSIBILITY #17: SUPPORT & ENCOURAGE CULTURAL IDENTITY

Foster parents have 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 birth 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.

- Training provided
- Lifebook's
- Procedure 302, Appendix K

Little City emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness to our foster parents throughout the licensure process and pre-service training, and throughout our subsequent on-going training program (see Training attachment.) Little City developed and implemented a "Cultural Sensitivity" training into our on-going training curriculum for foster parents. All agency staff received this training as well.

During the pre-licensure period and on-going at 6-month licensing and monitoring visits, home visits, CFTMs, and once a placement has been identified, there is discussion about the family's cultural identity and how they will incorporate the cultures of a child that may be different than their own. Incorporating a child's culture into the home, or promoting culture through food, visiting museums, reading books, and/or attending community events to name a few, aid in bolstering one's sense of self. If a family needs additional information we have many tools and resources to help them understand how to support a child's ties to their family and culture. This learning and assessing process is ongoing throughout the entire placement.

Foster parents are also trained on the importance of the foster child's life book as a tool for minimizing trauma and discussing culture, history and familial background. A life book training is included in our pre-service curriculum and families attending the training are provided with a hands on training where they create pages from their life book to understand how the tool can be used in supporting the child's relationship to his/her family and history.

When a family expresses a need for a specific training on meeting the cultural needs of a child or if a staff member identifies a deficiency in the foster parent's knowledge of cultural issues relevant to the child, the agency will work with the family to find educated staff to conduct a hands on training with the family or find community resources to provide training.

Procedure 302, Appendix K

DCFS has expanded expectations, services and resources for youth in care, staff and foster parents pertaining to providing culturally sensitive services to youth in care who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and more. Little City was the first agency in the state of Illinois to attain our seal of recognition as being culturally competent in serving the LGBTQ+ community (of youth and foster parents) and we remain committed to this mission by ensuring appropriate policies and procedures, trainings, recruitment, and more.



Attachment 1
2023 FOSTER PARENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Proof of On-going Training

1. **Pre Service is offered Quarterly: January, April, July & October**
2. **Ongoing Monthly Trainings (See 2023 Training Tuesday Calendar)**
3. **Proposed 2023 Pre-Service and Ongoing Training Calendars**

2023 Training Tuesdays

Trainings are offered the 2nd Tuesday of every month

(training credits provided)

11am - 1 pm via Teams Link

6pm –8pm via Teams link

Jan 11th:	FIP/Medication Management
Feb 8th:	Intro to Trauma (ARC Concepts)
March 9th:	Relationship & Resilience
April 12th:	Sexual Development
May 11th:	Proactive Strategies I
June 8th:	Proactive Strategies II
July 13th:	Off
Aug 9th:	De-escalation
Sept 13th:	Early Child Developmental Milestones
Oct 11th:	Working with Family Dynamics
November:	Adoption Month Training
December:	Happy Holidays! (no training)

Quarterly Trainings:

Pre-Service - Jan/April/July/Oct (RSVP Only) TBD

Via TEAMS Link

Specialty Training - TBA

CPR/First Aid - Online and In-person: 2nd Saturday of every month by appt

CPI - Online/Teams: 4th Saturday of every month

RSVP for Trainings:

Tspencer@littlecity.org or Beckman@littlecity.org

2023 PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Session 1:

January – Review FIP
January – Trauma
January – Intro to DD and Clinical Interventions
January – Transitions/Working as a Team/Family Dynamics
January – Keeping it Real

Session 2:

To be scheduled – April 2023

Session 3:

To be scheduled – July 2023

Session 4:

To be scheduled – October 2023

Contact Tijuana Spencer / tspencer@littlecity.org or Beth Eckman/ beckman@littlecity.org

Training to be held via TEAMS (virtual training) until further notice

PROPOSED 2023 Specialty Quarterly Trainings

February 2023 Autism: Lunch and Learn Series

June 2023 ARC Reflection Training 8 sessions

Trainings to be held via TEAMS (virtual training) until further notice

- *Topics are subject to change*



Attachment 2
2023 FOSTER PARENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**List of Foster Parents and/or Signatures involved in Plan Review
and Development**

SEE ATTACHMENT



Attachment 3
2023 FOSTER PARENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Foster Parent Endorsements of the 2023 Plan (see enclosed & attached)



Attachment 4
2023 Foster Parent Implementation Plan
Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure

Little City Foundation

Policies & Procedures

<i>Subject:</i>	<i>Policy #</i>
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION-GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE	PADM 28
<i>Approved:</i> 	<i>Page:</i>
<i>Issued:</i> 03/15	1 of 3
<i>Revised:</i>	

Date Reviewed 3/2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a formal procedure for Little City service recipients and guardians to state their grievances, appeal decisions or submit complaints. This policy also provides a time line for Little City Foundation staff to respond and to provide formal procedures to appeal as desired.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals receiving services from Little City and their guardians.

POLICY

It is the policy of Little City Foundation that whenever an individual or guardian presents a grievance they should be encouraged to make every effort to resolve the issue informally through communication and cooperation. If a resolution cannot be obtained, the individual or guardian has the right to pursue the matter through the grievance procedure outlined below.

Any individual who files a grievance, appeals a decision, or submit complaints has the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party and will not experience an interruption in service provision when exercising the right to file a grievance, appeal or a complaint. Little City Foundation will respond to all grievances or complaints as outlined in this procedure.

Little City Foundation will respond to all grievances, complaints, or appeals in an appropriate time frame, and will keep a log of all such complaints.

This policy will be shared with all parties at the time of intake into the program and reviewed annually with the review of the Client Rights Policy.

PROCEDURE

No grievances being presented or appealed will be reviewed by anyone directly involved in the action or decision.

If the individual is incapable of filing his/her own grievance and no guardian is available to assist, a person of the individual's choice will assist in preparing the grievance for either internal or external (state level) filing.

1. The grievance shall be presented in writing to the case manager or any similarly titled position. The case manager will review and investigate the grievance and draft a written response which must be approved by the supervisor prior to being given to the complainant. A written response will be provided to the complainant within ten working days. NOTE: If the case manager is part of the grievance proceed directly to number 2.
2. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the complainant can submit a written grievance to the Director within ten working days following the receipt of the original response. The Director will schedule a meeting within two days with the individual(s) who filed a grievance and will attempt to resolve the situation through discussion and document in writing the process and results. All parties involved will sign off on the documentation and receive copies for their record.
NOTE: If the Director is part of the grievance proceed to number 3.
3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the determination, he or she can submit the grievance in writing to the Chief Program Officer within ten working days following receipt of the response from the Director. The Chief Program Officer will conduct an objective thorough review and investigations of the grievance and provide a written response to the complainant within ten working days.
4. If extenuating circumstances exist which require additional time for resolution, an interim report will be submitted to the grieving party and carbon copied to any external parties that may be informed of the issue at the 10-day point. The interim report shall include the reason for the delay and an estimated date of completion of the investigation and response.
5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the determination, he or she can submit the grievance in writing to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will conduct an objective thorough review and investigation of the grievance and provide a written response to the complainant within ten working days. The Executive Director's decision regarding the grievance shall constitute a final administrative decision and shall be subject to review in accordance with the Administrative Review law (111. Rev. stat. 1987, ch. 110, per. 3-10, etc. seq. Dept. Mental Health).
6. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Executive Director's decision, certain decisions may be eligible for grievance from outside licensing entities such as DCFS and DHS (denial, reduction, suspension, termination of services). Refer to the Client's Rights policy distributed upon intake and annually for the contact information regarding DHS, and the Foster Parent Handbook available at the DCFS website for specific guidelines and directions for which issues may be appealed through DCFS.

The complainant has the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to file a grievance, appeal a decision or submit a complaint.

Individuals, guardians and advocates may also file grievances with the agency's Human Rights Committee for violation of individual's rights or right's restrictions. Any grievance regarding a rights issue should be addressed to Little City Foundation Human Rights Committee 1760 W. Algonquin Rd., Palatine, IL 60067

A separate grievance procedure applies for issues pertaining to accessibility to, confidentiality of, and disclosure of an individual's personal healthcare information. Any concerns regarding accessibility to or disclosure or confidentiality of personal health care information should be addressed in writing to the LCF HIPAA Privacy office at 1760 W. Algonquin Rd., Palatine, IL 60067.

Foster Care/Adoption Only:

Individuals receiving Foster Care Services have a specific form which has been provided at initial licensure, upon the placement of a child, and annually via issuance of the foster parent policy guide. The form is also posted on-line. The individual will notify, in writing, the Social Work Supervisor of the wish to file a grievance, appeal or complaint.

Foster Care/Adoption Program Grievance Form	
Date of Grievance:	
Subject of Grievance:	
What happened to cause you to be dissatisfied?	
How can we make this right?	
Name:	
Phone Number:	
Email:	
	<p>Submit completed forms by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mailing it to 700 N. Sacramento Blvd., Suite 201, Chicago IL 60612• Giving it to your caseworker or their supervisor in person• Filling it out online and emailing it to Licensing & Support Supervisor, Katherine Oglesby at: koglesby@littlecit.org• Bringing it to the office in person• Requesting a meeting with the child's treatment team, or supervisor, program manager, director, or licensing staff



Attachment 5

2021 FOSTER PARENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Grievances filed during the past year

Little City did not receive any comments from the public about our 2021 Foster Parent Implementation Plan. Little City's plan was publicly available on our website at [Foster Care & Adoption - Little City](#) and via publication.