



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

Little City's

Center for Family and Community Based Services

Foster Care and Adoption Program

2024 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: foster@littlecity.org -or-
- Licensing & Support Services Supervisor,
Tijuana Spencer (773)964-4157, tspencer@littlecity.org

**2024 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
Rule 340
FOSTER PARENT CODE**

LITTLE CITY

**Main Office: 1760 West Algonquin Road,
Palatine, IL 60067**

**Executive Office: 1610 Colonial Parkway
Inverness, IL 60067**

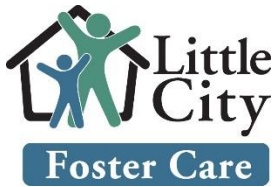
**Foster Care & Adoption Program Offices:
700 N. Sacramento Blvd, Suite 201
Chicago, IL 60612**

**600 Holiday Plaza Drive, Suite 350
Matteson, IL 60443**

**116 N. Chicago St, Suite 301
Joliet, IL 60432**

Table of Contents

1. Annual Report
2. Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities
 - A. Rights
 - B. Responsibilities
3. Attachments
 - a. Proof of Ongoing Training
 - b. Foster Parents who Reviewed and/or Revised this Plan
 - c. Foster Parent *Signatures (scanned separate)/ Emails of Endorsement
 - d. Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure
 - e. Grievances filed during the past year



Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Annual Report

Little City Foundation (LCF) received a rating of “Acceptable” for our 2023 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Little City was pleased with the strengths of the plan as noted by the Advisory Council.

Little City had a challenging year in 2023 because of high staff turn-over and challenges recruiting new foster parents. 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; permanency; 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’s Foster Care & Adoption Program successfully engaged-in several recruitment events throughout the year, including hosting open houses, hosting an alternative Spring Break and Holiday Party skating and bowling event, an Annual Picnic, family days in Matteson and Joliet, and an annual holiday gift drive with daily virtual events for all program participants (youth, foster parents, biological families, and staff.) Little City is an active member of a Foster Parent Recruitment Collaborative. Agency staff and foster parents participated in two events through this collaborative this year that involved hosting booths and engaging prospective foster parents who attended.

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

Little City provides all foster parents with an electronic and hard copy of the updated Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan each January. We provided the foster parents with a DCFS and Little City survey in order to obtain feedback. Throughout the year, all foster parents are provided with 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.

Throughout the year, Little City held quarterly virtual meetings and training courses on the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan to get foster parent input and feedback. Foster Parents’ suggestions were incorporated into this years’ Plan and embedded into program policies and procedures to ensure continuous quality improvement and service delivery. Foster Parents provided very positive and

constructive feedback during these sessions, in addition to within our bi-annual satisfaction surveys (delivered via USPS mail and electronically.)

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 2023 Plan:

1. Right #1 Dignity, Respect and Consideration and Right #3 Support:

Foster Parents consistently noted that they have a difficult time reaching program staff. This is somewhat impacted by the agency's hybrid working model but is also impacted by the foster parents not having current contact information on behalf of the program staff. All staff were alerted of this concern, and the agency's expectation that responsiveness to inquiries be timely (within 24 hours). Foster parents were also provided with the agency phone list at least quarterly, in addition to being provided easy to remember and use emails in order to reach a large listserv of program leaders, such as our foster@littlecity.org or Licensing@littlecity.org emails.

We implemented the ACT (Acknowledge, Communicate Quickly, and Timebox Solutions) response policy which states, "When any member of the Little City team is contacted by a client, family, guardian, and/or other external stakeholders regarding a service issue, it is the responsibility of program leadership to quickly acknowledge the communication and begin the steps necessary to address the concern using the ACT Principal (Acknowledge, Communicate Quickly, and Timebox Solutions)

1. Acknowledge-All complaints or concerns require an immediate acknowledgement upon receipt of the concern. Urgent complaints or those of a serious nature require an acknowledgement via phone call and then a follow-up written acknowledgement via text or email.

2. Communicate Quickly-Gather the information to learn more about the concern.

3. Timebox Solutions-After getting a full definition of the concern, provide the stakeholder a commitment on when you will contact them again with more information.

Acceptable timeframes include:

a. 1-4 hours if urgent

b. 6-12 hours if moderate

c. 12-24 hours if not urgent

d. 7 business days if internal department meeting/collaboration is necessary.

2. Right #2 Training: Foster parents continued to remark their satisfaction with our trainings being offered virtually (except for CPR/First Aid and CPI/Non-Violent Crisis Intervention). Their satisfaction has consistently been evidenced in increased participation in all offered training sessions each month, with program seeing nearly doubled numbers than when only in-person sessions were offered. The licensing department transitioned all training to Zoom in July 2022, enabling it to record all training for quicker access by parents and increase participation. The licensing department pre-recorded training for pre-service to make the process accessible and available to foster parents. The agency added new training courses to the schedule this year that address the foster parents request for more individualized/target training.

3. Right #4 On-Time Financial Reimbursement:

The agency provides all foster parents with direct deposit information to ensure the timeliest payment. We updated our payment tracking methods by switching to a cloud-based electronic billing system called Netsmart. We have included detailed payment and financial information in our Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and directed families to use our Plan as a resource guide.

Child-specific payment information is included in placement paperwork provided upon admission of a child to program or placement of a child into a new home as well.

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

All staff will receive a copy of the current Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and training on the Plan upon new hire. The Plan is included in new employee manuals, and training and understanding is supported in weekly 1:1 supervision. Our all-staff training provided another space for staff to offer input into the Plan. Each program Department hosts monthly team meetings at a minimum where program policies and procedures as outlined in the Plan are reviewed and discussed, and changes are then incorporated into this year's Plan.

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 Law 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 Law Implementation Plan availability via our website www.littlecity.org/foster; by email; and by providing hard copies of the updated Plan each January. New families to our program are provided with the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan as part of our pre-service training and as included within Child Files provided upon child placement into a home or case admittance to agency. Foster parents are prompted to use the Plan as a resource guide to understand the program's procedures, along with their rights and responsibilities in the quarterly training as well.

6. List the needs/deficiencies identified in our 2022 Plan and a description of ways revisions were incorporated in their current Plan.

Little City received the following feedback regarding our 2023 Plan: Deficiencies/ Suggestions for Improvement:

Narrative #4 needs to address payment for additional services in addition to respite. Funds are included for specialized, but not traditional:

Response: The agency added the traditional rates table. The agency added additional services for both specialized and traditional providers under Right #4.

Narrative #25(10) should also address training:

Response: We have Facebook foster parent support/round table group that provides a voice and safe space for foster parents to provide feedback and suggestions. This was added under Narrative #2(10)

Identify concrete ways to give foster parents a stronger voice within the agency (in addition to surveys.):

Response: We are considering creating a foster parent panel. We utilize foster parents in our recruitment process and that is listed under Narrative #25(10). We have a Facebook/round table group to provide support and give the foster parents a stronger voice. We offer a Q&A session and survey after trainings.

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’s Foster Care and Adoption Program developed our own form to collect Grievances as they specifically relate to the program in our 2022 Plan and we will continue the policy as had been written into 2024 Plan. Grievances may also be sent to program via the website by email. The policy and procedure are reviewed and revised as part of the Foster Parent Advisory Committee Meetings and within on-going training on the Plan. All new foster parents are trained on the Plan, 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 Plan that includes the procedure as well. Hard copies of the Plan 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: We removed the “Keeping it Real” training. We updated our pre-service to include pre-recorded training. We added new training topics to our FY24 calendar.

Right #1 Dignity, Respect and Consideration

We included our new ACT communication policy (Acknowledge, Communicate Quickly, and Timebox Solutions) to address concerns regarding timely and detailed responses.

Right #4 On-time Financial Reimbursement:

Foster Parents received 2% COLA pay increase effective October 01, 2023; this standard was revised to reflect that change.

9. A list of all revised Responsibility narratives.

Responsibility #1 Communication

Added our new ACT policy (Acknowledge, Communicate Quickly, and Timebox Solutions)

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 recognize their own strengths, limitations, and need for support.

Responsibility #10 Promote the Foster Parenting Experience:

Updated to reflect recruitment, retention and engagement from 2022 and what to look-out for in 2024. We added a line for foster parent training and foster parent recruitment opportunities.

Responsibility #11 Know the Roles and Responsibilities of the Child Welfare Team Members

Add new supportive roles/departments.

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.

The mission and values statements of Little City Foundation's (LCF) Foster Care and Adoption Program (FCAD) reflect inclusion and engagement of foster parents as key members of the treatment team. Little City's evidence-based treatment model (Attachment-Regulation-Competency/ARC) defines the foster parent relationship with the child as being the key change agent in the child's treatment and life. When any member of the Little City team is contacted by a client, family, guardian, and/or other external stakeholders regarding a service issue, it is the responsibility of program leadership to quickly acknowledge the communication and begin the steps necessary to address the concern using the ACT Principal (Acknowledge, Communicate Quickly, and Timebox Solutions)

Foster Parents are essential participants 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; 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, 2x/month for HMR, and 1x/month for traditional) through weekly check-ins via phone, text, and/or e-mail.

Administrators, Supervisors, and the Licensing team conduct random quality-check phone calls, home visits, licensing visits, and participate in CFTMs to ensure quality delivery of services and to provide timely follow up on any issues. Concerns are addressed with workers during supervision and reflected in annual performance evaluations.

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.

Little City's Foster Care and Adoption staff host over 200 hours of training for foster parents each year. Additionally, we connect foster parents to DCFS and/or community-based trainings of interest, as pertaining to a youth's needs in their care, or as required for licensure.

Little City's Foster Care and Adoption Program serves children with mild to severe needs. We have both traditional and specialized contracts with DCFS. Youth with special needs may have an intellectual, developmental, and/or emotional/behavioral disability. Little City provides tailored pre-service and on-going trainings specific to the clients we serve, consistent with procedures, and in compliance with the DCFS's required 4 annual (traditional) or 16 annual (specialized) training hours a year (see training attachment.) Training evaluation forms specifically noted satisfaction with the program's trainers and offered courses. Foster parent input attained from surveys, Plan review sessions, and more are incorporated into the program's training offerings. Little City also utilizes the Care Giver Matching Tool as well as a home study to assess training needs of new foster parents.

Most of Little City's training is delivered virtually via Zoom. Trainings are recorded and can be emailed to families for their viewing at their leisure, as well. The 2024 Training calendar was again developed with input from staff and foster parents. Little City will continue to engage foster parents in mutually assessing their training needs and locating/developing relevant training by assessing at semi-annual 597 licensing monitoring appointments, during quarterly Foster Parent Plan sessions, in bi-annual surveys, and as received in evaluations following delivered trainings.

Little City offers limited in-person training for CPR with a capacity limit of 8 people plus the trainer. Little City follows the American Heart Association recommendations and guidelines for CPR delivery. CPI (Non-Violent Crisis Intervention) is a hybrid of virtual pre-learning (On demand learning platform) and "in-person" (virtual classroom via ZOOM) classroom learning.

All non-related foster parents are required to complete DCFS's PRIDE Training; relatives are required to complete the home of relative (HMR) training. Little City ensures training enrollment and completion, liaises with the DCFS trainers, and incorporates what is learned in our comprehensive home study assessments. Little City has provided our foster parents with information to access their DCFS Learning and Development Center Training accounts in order to complete their annual training requirements <https://learning.dcf.illinois.gov>.

RIGHT #3: SUPPORT

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

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'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. Case Managers, Therapists, Supervisors, and Administrators are on-call.

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
- Respite
- Weekly in-home clinical support (individual and foster parent/child therapy or parent coaching)
- Behavioral therapy or Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)
- Case management
- Crisis Support
- Training
- Educational, Court, Medical advocacy
- Assessment and treatment planning
- Mental Health Practitioner community support services
- Permanency Planning and Support: Adoption and Subsidized Guardianship subsidy writing and legal finalization; transitions to independence (youth in college, transition to DHS services, etc.), reunification support, and
- Post-permanency clinical services
- Transportation assistance
- Recreational programming, free family fun events, etc.
- Service Coordination and linkage
- 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, convene multidisciplinary team meetings, and advocate on behalf of the child and their family. 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.

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

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.

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 or the last business day prior to the 15th. USPS mailed checks are mailed on the 15th and typically received around the 20th of the month following when care was provided. Direct Deposit is the best way to ensure timely payment.

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.)** 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 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 on a monthly basis. **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 DCF and reflect DCFS's 2% COLA Rate Increase Effective October 1, 2023.

Child's Age	Board	Transportation	Clothing	Allowance	Total
0 - 11 months	\$486.00	\$117.00	\$50.00	\$19.00	\$672.00
1 through 4 years	\$480.00	\$117.00	\$55.00	\$20.00	\$672.00
5 through 8 years	\$534.00	\$123.00	\$68.00	\$21.00	\$746.00
9 through 11 years	\$551.00	\$126.00	\$84.00	\$35.00	\$796.00
12 and over	\$515.00	\$160.00	\$90.00	\$62.00	\$827.00
Unlicensed Rate **					\$479.00
Specific Assistance					\$5.00

Age 0-4: \$22.09/day -

Age 5-8: \$24.53

Age 9-11: \$26.17

Age 12+: \$27.19

HMR: \$15.75

Specialized Board Payment Rate:

AFC Foster Parent Reimbursed Rate: \$56.10

SFC Foster Parent Reimbursed Rate: \$55.14/day

AFC/SFC ADMIN/CMO (Specialized Youth in Unlicensed Relative Homes aka HMR) with application on the system): \$46.76/day

Little City calculation	AFC 4074	FCN, FCS
Foster Parent Rate (prior to 10/1/2023) per month	\$1,518.10	1518.10
2% COLA	\$30.36	30.36
USDA Increase	\$157.86	\$129.27
New Foster Parent Rate (eff. 10/1/2023) per month	\$1,706.32	\$1,677.30

Foster Parents receive slightly varying rates month to month depending on the number of days in a month:
 $\$55.14 \times 31 = 1,709.34$; $\$55.14 \times 30 = \$1,654.20$ $\$55.14 \times 28$ (February) = $\$1543.92$

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.

Monthly

A. Room and Board \$428.40

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

B. Transportation \$217.26

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 \$847.62

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*

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 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 and Little City will assist all foster parents in identifying a respite resource if needed. Respite is reviewed quarterly and based upon the needs of the child and family. Foster Parents are reimbursed when they apply for respite and they and their chosen respite provider is approved for respite. Foster parents caring for youth with specialized and adolescent specialized needs may be eligible for 15 hours a month if approved; foster parents serving youth with traditional needs are assessed individually per our agency's DCFS contract. All reimbursement forms are due by the 5th of the month to get reimbursed for pre-approved respite provided by a foster parent's selected and agency approved respite provider. If agency is assisting with the provision of respite with another licensed provider, agency typically re-routes the daily rate to the respite provider for their care days unless the foster parents have made other arrangements. Late respite forms will not be reimbursed.

(2) Sibling and Parent-Child Visitation: Little City strives to maintain and strengthen family relationships. LCF reimburses foster parents for their supervision of sibling visits at the rate set by DCFS, which is approximately \$30/hour for a max of four hours a month plus mileage paid at the IRS rate. Documentation for the supervision of sibling visitation and transportation must accompany the request for reimbursement, the agency requests receipt of these monthly.

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, 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. Funds are included within the daily board rate.

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. 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 \$202.00 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 and funds maxed at \$1,763.
- b. Foster Parents who take residential step-down placements are also able to receive funding up to \$346 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. Foster parents will be able to access their own payment portals in 2024/2025 via the program's NTST/MyEvolv payment electronic payment system.**

Procedure for Resolving Payment Problems:

If there are any questions or concerns regarding payment, foster parents may contact the Chicago Office Manager at 773-265-1539 (Main #); Joliet Office Manager/Matteson Office Manager 331-276-5080 or email Leadership at foster@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. If, after following these methods, there are still unresolved issues, the foster parent is encouraged to call or email the Chicago Program Director, Valencia Randolph, directly at 312-545-3696 Cell, email/ vrandolph@littlecity.org or Matteson and Joliet Director, Carrie Wallace-Onifade at 847-848-5948 or cwallace-onifade@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.

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 home visits and 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. Little City has been able to expand on the use of virtual platforms like FaceTime, Zoom, and TEAMS as way to keep connections.

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 month home visits, quarterly CFTMs, ACRs 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. 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. 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 teens who require added skills for independence. 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.
- 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) for use to ensure all of the youth's belongings are sent clean, in a nice storage container or suitcase with him/her when moving to a new home.

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.

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 – these types of investigations are conducted by DCFS's Child Protective Services staff.

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, nor 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.

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 Subsidized 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.

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/their 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 of 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 monthly 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.

As the primary caregivers of the youth served in LCF's program, foster parents are key members of the youth's treatment team and offer a wealth of information about the youth and his/her/their 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 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.

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.

Little City strives to ensure continued placement stabilization within our foster care program. We have achieved an 90+% placement stability rate year after year 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.

Little City foster parents note that they received timely notification of court hearings. Foster parents have had increased Court engagement since the hearings have transitioned to being primarily virtual. Notification of hearings is provided verbally during 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. 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.

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 Law 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.

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.

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/they 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/they has added sustained relationships, social connections and support in his/her/their life.

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.

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 or emailing foster@littlecity.org. 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: <https://www.littlecity.org/foster>

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.

If no one within the organization is responsive to stated concerns after elevating up the ladder and/or staff did not implement the ACT communication response protocol, 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 aka Foster Parent Advocacy Office:

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>

<p>1. <u>Communicate with Child's Team:</u> <i>Openly communicate and share information about the child with the child welfare team.</i></p>
<p>2. <u>Respect Confidentiality:</u> <i>Respect the confidentiality of information about foster children and their families.</i></p>
<p>3. <u>Be An Advocate:</u> <i>Advocate for children in their care.</i></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>14. <u>Know Appeal Process:</u> <i>Know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and their rights.</i></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>
<p>17. <u>Support & Encourage Cultural Identity:</u> <i>Respect and maintain a child's cultural needs and support relationships with his own family.</i></p>

RESPONSIBILITY #1: COMMUNICATION

Foster parents have the responsibility to openly communicate and share information about child(ren) in their care.

As a key member of the treatment team, 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 areas 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 get support for 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. Agency also convenes Town Halls to share program information, and posts information on social media.

Foster parents preferred method to receive information can be via text, phone, or e-mail, or written communication via USPS mail. Agency discussed their procedures for information sharing and foster parents agreed that they received agency communication timely, and that they received an abundance of communication from Little City.

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.

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.

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 that time that foster parents are introduced to the concept of confidentiality. As families are licensed, the licensing worker will review the confidentiality agreement and the prospective foster parent signs 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.

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 part of the ongoing training, offered 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, virtual meeting, or gathers information to share verbally or in-writing at the meetings.

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: 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. 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 address 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.

If there are concerns related to this responsibility, they should be addressed directly by the case manager during a home visit. The case manager may solicit the assistance of his/her supervisor if violating this responsibility is an on-going issue, and/or report the concern to licensing. Little City wishes to resolve all concerns in a timely and 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.

This domain was discussed at length with foster parents this year during the Foster Parent Implementation Trainings and other trainings held throughout the year. Foster parents commented that they agreed that recognizing one's own strengths, limitations, and needs for support is key to providing good care to oneself, a youth in care, and one's own family.

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 assess 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. 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.

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.

Training provides our foster parents with an opportunity to network and connect. Little City offers over 200 hours of training a year. Most training is offered virtually and can be provided on-demand for parents to watch at their leisure and complete homework for training understanding and training credit. Little City continues to offer monthly trainings (aka “Training Tuesdays”), CPR/First Aid and CPI the second and fourth Saturday of each month respectively, pre-service trainings quarterly, special sessions (such as adoption month training), and more. Please refer to 2024 Training schedule for new Training rollout.

Little City also sponsors several in-person engagement, recognition, and networking events each year including our Annual Picnic, Foster Parent Appreciation Event, Alternative Spring Breaks, Holiday Events, and more. Foster parents also connect through Little City’s Foster Care Facebook page where stories, resources, and information are shared.

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>

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.

Little City conducts over 200 hours of training for our foster parents each year. Most training is delivered virtually, and a few in person for CPR at our office. 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.

Foster parents caring for traditional needs youth require 4 training hours per year; foster parents caring for specialized youth require 16 hours per year.

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 2024 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.

Families are informed of DCFS' Learning and Development Center (LDC) Training and their ability to register for an account. The LDC 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.

See Attachment A for full list of Trainings in 2024

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.

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 their Mental Health Practitioner (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 provide additional wraparound services to youth in crisis and in need of added support.

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 Being a 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.

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(specialized), - 2x/month(licensed) 1x/month (licensed), 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.

Little City believes that the most effective recruitment tool that we have is our current foster parents. Little City has successfully engaged and licensed an increased number relative and non-relative providers. We are continuing to successfully sustain and grow our pool of foster parents through these ways:

- Program hosted a back-to-school drive which provided book-bags and school supplies.
- Program hosts an Annual Summer Picnic and Winter Holiday Gift Drive.
- Program has attended community events, walked in the Chicago PRIDE parade, hosted nights at the ballpark, and teamed with the Joliet Chamber of Commerce and Chicago LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce to recruit.
- 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.
- 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://www.littlecity.org/foster>
- Foster Care Facebook page <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;
- Instagram has been created with a video "I am a Foster Parent" videos <http://instagram.com/littlecityfostercare>
- Little City created several YouTube promotional videos that can be found by searching Little City Foster Care.
- A minimum of quarterly events including alternative spring break, open houses, and more.
- We provide a monthly training calendar to all foster parents and offer these trainings throughout the year. We also included the foster parents' suggestions in our newly added trainings.
- We hold a quarterly round-table event that includes foster parents in order to provide a voice and safe space for foster parents to provide feedback and suggestions.

- Little City seeks to engage families interested in helping at various levels of engagement: volunteering, donating, mentoring, providing respite, or fostering.
- Foster parents are our primary recruiters. We involve our foster parents in our recruitment process.

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.

Foster parents are provided with program procedures in the LCF Foster Parent Handbook; trainings, specifically "Working as a Team" the Little City placement contract; the Little City Therapy Contract; Town Halls; 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 Law Implementation Plan. The committee includes staff from all levels of the agency.
- Foster parents and team members from all levels within the organization participate in our quarterly events.

Key Team Members of a Youth's Child Welfare Team:

Office Manager:

- Manages daily office needs; fax, mail, correspondence, supplies, copying, IT, etc.
- Provides customer service to all callers
- Rectifies billing issues
- Processes respite
- Manages all continuous quality improvement for program
- On- and Off-Boards all staff
- Supervises Case Aide
- Provides support to program staff and Program Directors in particular
- Has a bachelor's degree and is required to take ongoing agency training

Child Welfare Specialist (CWS) aka Case Manager

- Responsible for ensuring that all the needs of the child are met and services provided
- Responsible for moving the case toward permanency
- Responsible for monitoring the care received by the foster parent; and for giving feedback/constructive criticism regarding their care for the child
- Responsible for advocating the rights of the child in court, school, and within the foster home
- Has either a bachelor's or master's degree in human services
- Is licensed in the state of Illinois as a Child Welfare Worker
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency

Case-Aide:

- Provides transportation to youth or birth parents to visitation
- Supervises parent/child and sibling visits
- Complete visitation notes
- Assists with office needs

Permanency Specialist:

- Responsible for the completion of adoption and subsidized guardianship subsidy writing and completion
- Supports the CWS Team to attain permanency to adoption or subsidized guardianship
- Provides staff and foster parent training on adoption or subsidized guardianship

Permanency Specialist Supervisor:

- Responsible for overseeing, supervising and supporting the permanency specialist
- Responsible for the completion of adoption and subsidized guardianship subsidy writing and completion
- Supports the CWS Team to attain permanency to adoption or subsidized guardianship
- Provide weekly supervision
- Provides staff and foster parent training on adoption or subsidized guardianship
- Responsible for training and supervising the Permanency Specialists
- Has a master's degree in human services
- Has at least 3 years of experience in child welfare, and experience supervising
- Is licensed the state of Illinois as a Child Welfare Worker
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency

Foster Care & Adoption Supervisor

- Responsible for all critical decisions on foster care team cases including permanency goal, visitation status, and foster home placement.
- Responsible for training and supervising the Child Welfare Specialists
- Responsible for problem solving when differences arise between the agency and foster parents, or between the agency/foster parents and outside parties
- Has a master's degree in human services
- Has at least 3 years of experience in child welfare, and experience supervising
- Is licensed the state of Illinois as a Child Welfare Worker
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency

Family Recruitment and Matching Coordinator:

- Responsible for recruiting foster and pre-adoptive families
- Manages all program social media and marketing plans
- Engages in prospective family cultivation activities (phone calls, invitations to events)
- Oversees orientation and training of foster and pre-adoptive families
- Hosts family fun events, recruitment events, and foster parent appreciation events
- Assesses and facilitates all program intakes and intake paperwork and staffings
- Engages in Family Finding and engagement
- Has either a bachelor's or master's degree in human services
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency

Family Recruitment and Matching Supervisor:

- Same as above, but manages the team of FRMCs
- Makes critical decisions pertaining to intakes to accept or decline
- Manages reporting, billing, and other administrative aspects of program
- Has a master's degree in human services and several years' experience in the field including supervising.
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency.

Licensing Representative

- Reviews application and submits to DCFS Central Office of Licensing
- Engages prospective family in all aspects of licensure (Training, Home Study, Home Safety per Procedures 402 and Child Care Act)
- Conducts foster parent, client and staff trainings such as CPR/FA, CPI, Financial Literacy, and more
- Completes licensing home monitoring visits
- Conducts licensing investigations
- Has a bachelor's degree in human services
- Is licensed in 402 and Child Care Act, and as a Child Welfare Employee (CWEL)
- Is required to take ongoing training from DCFS and the agency

Licensing and Support Services Supervisor

- Responsible for approving all foster care and pre-adoptive licenses.
- Responsible for training and supervising the licensing representatives
- Engages in administrative tasks to ensure program compliance with HMR licensure, meeting deadlines
- Develops and delivers foster parent, staff, and client training
- Has a master's degree in human services
- Has at least 3 years of experience in child welfare, and experience supervising
- Is licensed the state of Illinois as a Child Welfare Worker, 402, Child Care Act.
- Completes 906s, Placement Clearances to ensure safe placements and payment

Mental Health Practitioner:

- Responsible for working collaboratively with MH Therapists on execution of clinical goals through community-based support
- Provides direct services to clients 1:1 or in groups
- Has a bachelor's degree in human services and is required to complete ongoing agency training.

Mental Health Therapist

- Responsible for individual therapy with children, individual therapy with birth parents, & family therapy
- May provide parent-coaching
- Responsible for training and consultation with foster parents on therapeutic interventions with their child
- Provides staff, client and/or foster parent training
- Has a master's degree in social work, psychology, or counseling
- Is licensed as a LCSW or LCPC (or is eligible within 2 years)
- Is required to take training aligned with their licensure and as required by the agency

Behavioral Therapist

- Uses the principles of applied behavioral analysis (ABA) to analyze behavior in order to promote safety, well-being and independence.

- Responsible for individual therapy with children and parent coaching
- Responsible for training and consultation with foster parents on therapeutic interventions with their child
- Provides staff, client and/or foster parent training
- Has a master's degree in Applied Behavioral Analysis
- Is licensed as a Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst
- Is required to take training aligned with their licensure and as required by the agency

Clinical Supervisor

- Responsible for the clinical direction of treatment for the child via supervision with the Therapists
- Provides clinical supervision and report review for all Therapists
- Has a master's degree in social work, psychology, or counseling and at least 3 years of experience
- Is licensed as a LCSW or LCPC
- Is required to take training aligned with their licensure and as required by the agency

Director of Clinical Services

- Responsible for all operations in Clinical Program
- Responsible for ensuring quality and consistency in all programs
- Responsible for fiscal management of all programs
- Supervises the Clinical Supervisors
- Has a master's degree in human services and at least 5 years of experience in supervision/management in a child welfare setting
- Is licensed as LCPC or LCSW
- Is required to attend ongoing training as required by the licensure board and by the agency

Director of Foster Care & Adoption Services

- Responsible for all operations in Foster Care, and Adoption Program
- Responsible for ensuring quality and consistency in all programs
- Responsible for fiscal management of all programs
- Supervises the Child Welfare Supervisors
- Has a master's degree in human services and at least 5 years of experience in supervision/management in a child welfare setting
- Is licensed in the state of Illinois as a Child Welfare Worker
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency

Director of Placement and Permanency:

- Responsibility for all operations in the licensing, intake/recruitment and permanency programs.
- Supervises the licensing, permanency and intake/recruitment supervisors
- Has a master's degree in human services and at least 5 years of experience in supervision/management in a child welfare setting
- Is licensed in the state of Illinois as a Child Welfare Worker
- Is required to attend ongoing training from DCFS and from the agency
- Responsible for budget management
- Responsible for recruitment
- Provide weekly supervision

Vice President of Family and Community Services:

- Responsible for supervising the Program Directors
- Responsible for the financial aspects of the program
- Provide overall program(s) oversight and development including programmatic impact and financial sustainability including future growth of programs and services, and implementation of the programs' strategic plan.
- Leads the programmatic expansion of services to youth and families, as aligned with funding opportunities and State defined services that may include an array of services provided along a continuum of care in the life of a child and family from prevention to intervention, aftercare, and community engagement.
- Responsible for ensuring the daily program operations align with the agency/program's strategic vision including development of multiple sites and/or community-based services including foster/adoptive parent recruiting, licensing, training, intake, clinical, and case management staff for the program.
- . Build and maintain relationships with other social service agencies, Federal and state agencies, city and county governmental entities, and other community-groups stakeholders such as DCFS, DHS and MCO/Healthcare leaders.
- Ensures the implementation of all Federal, State and Little City policies and procedures; creates and implements policies, procedures and protocols related to the delivery of services for each program.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

- Youth's Court-appointed attorney
- Represents the youth's best interest in Court hearings
- Visits the youth in placement, attends meetings, and advocates for their well-being

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)(depends on court county):

- Appointed by the Judge
- Non-legal party that represents the youth's best interest in Court hearings
- Visits the youth in placement, attends meetings, and advocates for their well-being
- Trained Volunteers

Judge:

- Makes legally-binding decisions on cases pertaining to permanency, services, visitation and more.

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.

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.

This was discussed a lot in Plan meetings. Foster parents understood this responsibility and did a good job responding to vignettes and scenarios. They also talked openly about the process of reporting and engaging the team after a report is made.

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)** or **reporting non-life threatening instances electronically to <https://dcfsonlinereporting.dcf.illinois.gov/>** and then to youth's 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.

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. Participation has increased somewhat due to these meetings transitioning to virtual platforms. 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 monthly 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.

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 Law Implementation Plans annually that includes foster parents' rights (the Plan is also maintained at <https://www.littlecity.org/foster>)

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) or email foster@littlecity.org 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.

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 2023/2024; 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.

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. 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 Law Implementation Plan" and "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.

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. LGBTQ training is a DCFS Requirement for licensure renewal. Little City was the first organization in the state of Illinois to have attained the Human Rights Campaign All Children All Families Seal of Recognition for being culturally competent in serving the LGBTQ community. We have maintained our HRC Seal since then by having embedded policies, procedures, and practices that are affirming and welcoming. On-going training is provided to all agency staff.

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
2024 FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Proof of On-going Training

1. **Pre-Service is offered Quarterly: January, April, July & October**
2. **Ongoing Monthly Trainings (See 2024 Training Tuesday Calendar)**
3. **Proposed 2024 Pre-Service and Ongoing Training Calendars**

2024 PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Quarterly

Review Foster Parent Law Plan
Trauma
Intro to Special Needs Youth and Clinical Interventions
Transitions/Working as a Team/Family Dynamics

Session 1:
January 2024

Session 2:
April 2024

Session 3:
July 2024

Session 4:
October 2024

Contact Deneve Carter/ dcarter@littlecity.org or Beth Eckman/ beckman@littlecity.org

Training to be held via ZOOM

2024 Training Tuesdays

Trainings are offered the 2nd Tuesday of most months

(Training credits provided)

11am - 1 pm via ZOOM Link

6pm –8pm via ZOOM link

LCF Monthly Training Foster Parent 2024

Jan: FIP/ Medication Management

Feb: What is Trauma

March: Expectations-Traditional VS Specialized

April: Developmental Milestones

May: Transitions

June: Behavioral Techniques

July: No Training

Aug: Intro to Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

Sept: Cultural Diversity and Sexual Development

Oct: Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC)

November: Adoption Panel

December: Holidays! (no training)

Quarterly Trainings:

Pre-Service - Jan/April/July/Oct 2024

Via Zoom Link

Specialty & On-Demand Trainings: ARC, Autism 101, Adoption and More

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

CPI – ZOOM and in-person: 4th Saturday of every month by appt

RSVP for Trainings:

FosterCareTraining@littlecity.org

Licensing@littlecity.org



Attachment 2
2024 FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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

SEE ATTACHMENT



Attachment 3
2024 FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Foster Parent Endorsements of the 2024 Plan

SEE ENCLOSED



Attachment 4 2024 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure

Little City Foundation Policies & Procedures

Subject:

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION-GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Policy #

PADM 28

Approved:

Issued:

03/23

Revised:

Page:

1 of 3

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 timeline 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 the foster care office where your case is serviced out of • Giving it to your caseworker or their supervisor in person • Filling it out online https://www.littlecity.org/foster • Emailing it to Licensing & Support Supervisor, Tijuana Spencer at: tspencer@littlecity.org • Emailing it to foster@littlecity.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

2024 FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Grievances filed during the past year

Little City did not receive any comments nor grievances from the public about our 2024 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Little City's Plan was publicly available on our website at <https://www.littlecity.org/foster> and via publication.