

## FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2024**

**Based on the Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19)**

**FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2024**

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**FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS. A foster parent’s rights include, but are not limited to, the following:**

**Dignity and Respect**

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

* Brightpoint case managers, supervisors and all other staff respect the caregiver’s experience and knowledge of the child/youth in their care by promptly returning phone calls, considering their schedule in making appointments, being on time for visits and calling to cancel or reschedule when necessary.
* Brightpoint supervisors and program managers/directors are expected to respond quickly to problems and concerns that are brought to their attention. While a caregiver’s primary contact is the case manager, the supervisor or program manager and/or director may be contacted when the case manager is not available.
* Upon placement, the case manager provides the caregiver with the names and phone numbers for the case manager, supervisor, program manager and/or director and a number to call in case of an emergency. The names and phone numbers are included in the Child/Youth Record Folder which is provided to caregivers at the time of placement.
* Caregivers are provided, formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences and suggestions for improvement. This feedback is collected through surveys, meetings and one-on-one conversations.
* Caregivers receive a copy of the agency’s statewide Caregiver’s Newsletter in an effort to keep caregivers informed about agency activities and policy updates, and including them as professional members of the child welfare team.
* Brightpoint staff encourage service providers to include caregivers as members of the child welfare team, and to be available for problem resolution if needed.
* Agency staff are accountable for treating caregivers with dignity and respect through regular supervision and observations. If a caregiver feels disrespected by any agency employee, they are encouraged to address concerns with the immediate supervisor, caregiver support specialist, or Advocacy Office.
* Brightpoint have Caregiver Peer Support is available in all three regions. The Support program aligns veteran caregivers with new caregivers to provide knowledge, support, and training through the first years of licensure.
* Brightpoint offers a Meaningful Connection training to all employees which focuses on partnering and engaging parents, youth, and caregivers through a trauma-informed lens.

**Training**

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

* Brightpoint licensing staff ensure new caregivers attend PRIDE pre-service training, which includes 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes. Adoption Conversion training is required when a caregiver plans to adopt a child/youth. Licensing staff assist caregivers in receiving a minimum of 16 hours of in-service training over the four-year licensing period, and more training depending on the child/youth’s needs and placement contract requirements.
* Case managers, licensing representatives, and support specialists discuss individual training needs with caregivers. Training needs are mutually agreed upon by the caregivers and agency. Training needs are incorporated into the Foster Home Monitoring Record (CFS 597), which is completed on a semi-annual basis. Staff work with caregivers to address these needs through live or web trainings, videos, and reading materials such as the agency’s “Skill of the Month”.
* On-going training needs are assessed through discussions with caregivers, support specialists, case manager, and/or licensing representative. Training is based on:
* Type of care provided – traditional, specialized, or sibling foster care
* Age of child/youth
* Individual needs of the child/youth
* Caregivers needs in understanding and caring for the child/youth
* Required trainings to maintain licensure
* Areas of interest to caregivers
* Brightpoint staff inform caregivers of available local, state, and national trainings.
* The Statewide Family Newsletter is distributed quarterly to caregivers. The newsletters include internal and external training opportunities, and schedules,

Caregivers can also access DCFS trainings through: [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org).

* Brightpoint utilizes a digital training platform with a multitude of caregiver, parent, and community partner created trainings. These trainings focus on areas identified by caregivers and parents as important, and additional trainings are added to the system monthly.
* The Brightpoint Caregiver Support team works with parents and caregivers to develop digital training throughout the year. Brightpoint recently purchased a digital training platform through Knovio. All parent and caregiver training will be available on this platform which will be accessible on any digital device.
* Some of the Training includes:
  + - New Caregiver Orientation
    - Support/Training Groups
    - Core Teen Training
    - Self-Care Support Group
* Brightpoint is committed to becoming a trauma-informed agency which requires staff at all levels to learn, embrace, and embody the core values and principles of a trauma-informed approach to service delivery. The agency requires all staff to complete Trauma 101 training and many staff are also trained in the Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) framework. Agency staff provide support to caregivers through a trauma-informed lens and offer resources and skill development to caregivers on an ongoing basis.
* The Statewide Family Newsletter also includes the ARC skill of the month.
* Caregiver Support actively review various training topics with caregivers as needed. Training topics focus on developing skills to be successful in the Caregiver role.

**Contact with the Agency for Support**

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

* Upon licensure, caregivers receive the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook which contains a section listing available supports and contact information. Licensing staff follow up at the time a child/youth is placed to ensure licensed caregivers have a copy of the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook.
* Caregivers provided access to a peer Caregiver Support Specialist who aides in the completion of a support plan for each caregiver. The Support plan is created based on the individual support needs of the foster family by strengthening and maintaining positive protective factors.
* At the time a child/youth is placed in the home, the caregivers receive the Child Record Folder, which includes the following:
* Statewide numbers: Advocacy Office, Foster Parent Hotline, and the DCFS Medical Consent Unit.
* Local numbers: names and phone numbers of the appropriate Brightpoint case manager, caregiver support specialist, supervisor, and manager/director. Also included is the agency’s after hours/emergency number which enables caregivers to reach an on call staff person 24-hours a day. After hours emergency service is available 7 days a week. Depending on the region, a case manager, and/or supervisor is on call, with back up available to provide support.
* The phone number for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is on the OIG brochure that is provided to caregivers at the time of licensure and at the time a child/youth is placed in the home.
* Case managers ensure caregivers have numbers to access support services such as Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Healthworks, and treatment providers such as therapists and psychiatrists based on the needs of each individual child/youth.

Caregivers can request contact information anytime throughout service delivery.

**Timely Financial Reimbursement**

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

* Board payments are mailed or direct deposited to all caregivers each month during the week of the 12th. The amount of the board payment is based on the level of care the individual child/youth require. In the event of payment delays, Brightpoint case managers and/or management staff make every effort to notify caregivers of reasons for delays and work diligently to resolve the issue.
* The additional payment to caregivers for a child/youth who are approved for a higher level of care through a Clinical Intervention to Placement Preservation (CIPP) meeting is added to the next monthly board payment.
* The agency completes prompt payments for a child/youth who moves into a different contract (behavioral, medical, or sibling connections).
* Caregivers who experience issues regarding board payments should contact the assigned case manager or program administrative assistant, who will work with the agency finance department to resolve the issue.
* Caregivers are reimbursed in a timely manner for expenditures that are pre-approved by the agency. A comprehensive list of expenses that are not included in the board payment, and may be reimbursable are listed below. Examples of the types of expenditures that may be reimbursed include:
  + Camp/recreational activities
  + Respite for qualified placements on a case-by-case basis
  + Cultural enrichment
  + Educational expenses
  + Emergency clothing replacement
* Receipts for approved expenditures should be submitted to the case manager within 60 days of approval. The finance department will process payments within 30 days of receiving receipts.

Staff will assist caregivers with trouble shooting to ensure timely reimbursement.

**Placement Plan**

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

* Service plans are based on the family and child/youth’s needs. They are written by the case manager in conjunction with the family. Caregivers are encouraged to be active participants in the service planning process and are expected to support the permanency goal, visitation plan, and services involving the child/youth placed in their home. Caregivers are encouraged to provide input regarding the child/youth’s strengths and needs to be included in the service plan.
* Brightpoint case managers and supervisors use Child and Family Team Meetings and include caregivers when possible, in reviewing the child/youth’s portion of the plan including the visitation plan. Caregivers are responsible in supporting visitation plans which emphasize and promote family connections and rituals.
* Caregivers are expected to participate in shared parenting activities to support reunification goals for the youth and family. Support provided to caregivers by the Caregiver Support staff members to aide in successful shared parenting experiences.
* For new cases, caregivers will complete the “Get to Know My Family” document with their assigned Caregiver Support Specialist and participate in a Shared Parenting Meeting
* Within 10 days of an initial or subsequent service plan, the case manager provides caregivers with the portion of the plan that relates to the child/youth and expectations of the caregivers. They also receive a copy of the visitation plans which promotes family (parent and sibling) relationships.
* The same is true when a child/youth has a placement change, the new caregivers are provided a copy of the service plan that relates to the child/youth and expectations of the caregivers which also includes parent/child and/or sibling visitation plans.
* Brightpoint program staff encourages and supports caregivers’ active participation in sibling visitation. Brightpoint believes sibling visitation should occur in the most natural setting possible and encourages caregivers fostering siblings develop a relationship and facilitate sibling visitation. The case manager is available to assist in this process.
* Brightpoint program staff provides verbal (phone or in person) or written (email or letter) notice of Administrative Case Reviews and changes in placement, visitation, and permanency goals throughout service delivery. Notice is provided to caregivers within 2 business days of decision being made/learned of.
* If the agency determines it to be in the best interest to remove a child/youth from a foster home, the caregivers receive a written Notice of Change of Placement from the case manager/supervisor, which explains the reason and date for removal. This notice also includes the process for caregivers to request a Clinical Placement Review if they disagree with the decision. All decisions to remove a child/youth are staffed and approved by the supervisor, manager, and program director. If it is determined the child/youth is in serious risk of harm, they will be removed immediately.
* When a child/youth of a different race/culture is placed in a foster home, the case manager and/or licensing representative provide caregivers with information and/or training opportunities on the child’s cultural heritage.

**Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations**

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

**Steps taken when a complaint is filed against foster parents**

* Caregivers are notified of any licensing complaints, which may be followed by a home visit to address the concerns, and/or an investigation.
* There are two types of investigations:
* Complaint Investigation: Allegations of a violation of 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes. This investigation is completed by the licensing representative.
* Abuse/Neglect Investigation: Allegations of abuse or neglect. This investigation is completed by a DCFS investigator. This type of allegation implies the caregiver may not be adhering to 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes; therefore, a concurrent investigation by the licensing representative will occur.
* During any type of investigation, the foster home may be placed on hold by DCFS or Brightpoint depending on the alleged violations. This means no child/youth can be placed in the home while it is on hold.
* When there are serious allegations concerning the safety of a child/youth, including allegations of abuse or neglect, a safety plan may be put into place or the child/youth removed from the home.

**Foster parent rights when there is a complaint or investigation**

* Caregivers have the following rights whenever they are the subject of a complaint or investigation (per Public Act 89.19 - Foster Parents Rights):
  + The right to have a person of their choosing present during the investigation and due process.
  + To be provided a fair, timely and impartial investigation of licensing complaint issues, to begin within two (2) business days after a complaint is received. There will not be an investigation if:
    - the alleged violation occurred more than 60 days before the complaint was received and is not continuing;
    - the complaint is anonymous and there is no allegation of immediate physical danger to the child; or
    - no violations of applicable laws, licensing standards or rules are apparent from the complaint.

**Licensing Investigation Procedure**

* A licensing investigation is completed within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the complaint. Within fifteen (15) business days after completing the investigation, a formal determination is made whether a licensing violation occurred. Within five (5) business days of the determination, a certified letter is sent to the caregiver summarizing the findings of the investigation, which include:
* The right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation and/or an administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters. A certified letter is sent to the caregivers who are determined to be in violation of licensing rules or standards which includes the process to request an informal review of the decision. Caregivers have (10) days from the postmark of the letter, to send a written request to the licensing supervisor.
* The right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated. If there is a determination licensing standards or rules are violated, a certified letter is sent to the caregivers citing the standard violation.
* If findings indicate the caregivers have not complied with the corrective action plan and come into compliance with licensing standards within a reasonable period of time, a registered letter is sent to the foster parents. The letter will outline the agency’s plan to revoke the license, and inform the caregivers they have ten (10) days from the postmark of the registered letter to request in writing a hearing through DCFS. The caregivers will then receive a letter from DCFS advising them of their rights.

**Appeals process**

* The agency Foster Parent Grievance Policy and Procedure, agency Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality and the OIGBrochure aredistributed to all caregivers at the time of licensure and is shared is on a regular basis, as needed and upon request. During monitoring visits, licensing representatives remind caregivers of the grievance policy should they need it.
* Caregivers receive a copy of the DCFS Appeal Process at the time of a licensing investigation or when the decision is made to remove a child/youth from the home.
* The DCFS Service Appeal brochure outlines specifically what can be appealed by caregivers – placement decisions and services relating to the child and/or caregivers.
* To request a Service Appeal contact:
* Administrative Hearings Unit

Department of Children and Family Services

406 E. Monroe St., Station 15

Springfield, IL 62701

217 782-6655

* Caregivers can also request a DCFS Service Appeal if they disagree with the decision made in the Clinical Placement Review regarding the change in placement of a child/youth in their care. The request must be made within 10 days of the Clinical Placement Decision. The Brightpoint’s Appeal/Grievance policy outlines the process and includes time frames. Program staff are available to answer questions about the agency and DCFS appeal procedures.
* Brightpoint’s Caregiver Grievance Procedure is used by caregivers for grieving violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. It cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the agency or DCFS appeal processes.
* Brightpoint program directors, managers, and supervisors ensure staff are familiar with thelicensing investigation process as well as the Brightpoint and DCFS appeal processes. Brightpoint completes licensing investigations within the time frames required by DCFS policy and procedure. In cases of suspected child abuse and neglect reports**,** DCFS completes the investigation.

**Written statement of Rights + Responsibilities and Foster Parent Grievance Procedure**

* At the time of licensure caregivers receive the Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities and Caregiver Grievance Procedure.

**Additional Information about Children**

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

* Case managers are trained to notify caregivers of new information on an ongoing basis as it is learned about the child/youth placed in the home.
* Case managers meet with caregivers at least monthly and provide important developments as it relates to the child/youth placed in the home. Caseworkers provide caregivers with updates such as the child/youths physical or mental health condition and changes in visitation or permanency goals as they become available throughout service delivery. Shared information about the child/youth may be provided verbally or in written form, and is provided within the limits of confidentiality (does not violate HIPPA rights or the family’s rights)
* Accountability is provided during regular supervision. Supervisors are also present during Child & Family Team Meetings and ensures accurate up to date information is shared with caregivers.
* For all new cases to the organization, a “Get to Know My Child” document is completed by the parents and provided directly to the caregivers during the Shared Parenting Meeting.

**Information Given About Children at or Prior to Placement**

**8. The right to be given information concerning the child from the Department of Children and Family Services and from the child welfare agency.**

* To ensure caregivers receive comprehensive information on a child/youth placed with them, case managers use the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form (CFS 600-4). It requires case managers to provide caregivers with all the information necessary to care for the child in writing within 10 business days of a child/youth’s placement. The information provided in writing and include:
  + Case Information and History
  + Health and Medical
  + Educational Information and History
  + Placement History
  + Behavior/Social Information
* The caregiver signs the Sharing Information form acknowledging receipt of the information and understanding they may review the child/youth specific supporting information in the case record in the presence of casework staff. The form is placed in the child/youth’s record with a copy provided to the caregivers.
* In advance of the child/youth’s placement, the placing worker will provide the caregiver with a summary of the above information.
* If the placement is an emergency placement, the caregiver may be informed verbally of the child’s needs but the information will subsequently be provided in writing.
* If any of the required information is not available at the time of the child/youth’s placement, it will be provided to caregivers as it becomes available.
* Caregivers are encouraged to notify the case manager or supervisor and request the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form and written documentation if it is not provided within 10 business days of a child’/youths placement.
* For all new cases to the organization, a “Get to Know My Child” document is completed by the parents and provided directly to the caregivers during the Shared Parenting Meeting.
* Case Managers receive training on Sharing Information with caregivers in Caregivers DCFS Foundation Training and throughout the new hire 6-month orientation period.

Compliance with the use of this form and the information sharing process is gathered and measured from the internal peer review process.

**Notifications – Methodology**

**9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians and teachers.**

* Case managers provide caregivers, either verbally or by written notice of scheduled meetings, administrative case reviews (ACRs), staffings, and court dates.
* When caregivers cannot be present at court, ACR’s, or staffings, case managers attempt to get caregiver’s input and perspective regarding the child/youth and share the information with the professional team.
* Case managers are expected to share important decisions concerning the child/family with caregivers within 48 hours.
* Verbal notification of scheduled meetings, ACRs, staffings and court dates, discussion of service planning and provision, and the child’s functioning and progress toward the established permanency goal are discussed and shared during home visits. The case manager documents interactions with caregivers in case notes.
* Supervisors are responsible for ensuring proper communication between case managers and caregivers and often review case notes to ensure proper communication is occurring and documented appropriately.
* Brightpoint staff considers caregivers members of the professional team and values their input and experiences. Case managers consider caregiver’s ideas, opinions, and knowledge of the child/youth’s strengths and needs to determine services and complete service plans and permanency plans as a support to successful reunification.
* As a member of the professional team, caregivers are expected to communicate regularly and share information with other members of the professional team, including case managers, licensing representatives, child welfare supervisors, counselors/therapists, school personnel, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and parents or any additional members of the team.
* In the best interest of the child/youth, caregivers are expected to transport the child/youth to appointments and participate in services as needed and share valuable information with the case team and parents.
* Case managers provide caregivers with names, addresses and phone numbers of all professionals working with the child/youth.

**All Necessary Information on Child/Family**

**10. The right to be provided, 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. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to the information that is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the child's family, the child’s family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

* Case managers provide pertinent information concerning the health and well-being of a child/youth to caregivers at the time of placement and throughout service delivery as it becomes available, within the limits of confidentiality. The Child/Youth Record Folder is provided to the caregiver at placement and is used to share and maintain important information.
* Information that is shared with caregivers at the time of placement, or as soon as it becomes available, include:
* Basic personal information about the child
* Why the family entered the system
* Placement history
* Permanency goal
* Visitation information
* Educational history, status and needs
* Special medical, developmental, emotional, or behavioral needs
* Services needed
* Service providers and contact information
* Religious information
* Other information needed to understand and care for the child/youth
* Documents that are shared with caregivers at the time of placement, or as soon as they become available include:
  + Medical card
  + Health passport
  + Consents for ordinary and routine medical, dental, hearing and vision care
  + Child’s portion of the service plan
  + Visitation plan(s)
  + Sibling contact information (if applicable)
  + 906 Placement Authorization form
  + Individualized Education Plan (if applicable)
* To ensure caregivers receive comprehensive information on child/youth placed with them, Brightpoint uses the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form which ensures a written summary of known information about the child/youth is provided to the caregivers within 10 days of placement.
* Brightpoint promotes shared parenting and encourages caregivers and parents to share information and maintain healthy positive relationships and boundaries in the best interest of the child/youth and family. These relationships are supported during the Shared Parenting Meeting with the caregivers and parents support members as well as during regular Child and Family Team Meetings.

**Child Movement – Replacement**

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

* Brightpoint program staff usethe DCFS Notice of Decision or Notice of Change of Placement forms to inform caregivers of placement terminations and changes, and reasons for such decisions. In non-imminent risk situations, a clinical meeting is held with the caregiver, case manager, supervisor, and program manager and/or director, if needed, to discuss and process the reason(s) for the change. All placement changes are approved by the supervisor, program manager and/or director.
* Caregivers are given 14-day notice before removing a child/youth except in cases of imminent risk.
* The Notice of Change of Placement form outlines the process for caregivers to request a DCFS Clinical Placement Review of the decision to remove the child/youth from the home.
* Caregivers can request a DCFS Service Appeal if they disagree with the decision made in the Clinical Placement Review to remove the child/youth from the home. Caregivers must initiate the request within 10 days of the Clinical Placement Decision.
* The DCFS Service Appeal brochure also outlines other decisions caregivers can appeal and includes the process.
* Brightpoint staff will provide caregivers with the DCFS Appeal brochure and assist them with the process if needed.
* To make a Service Appeal, put the request in writing to:
* Administrative Hearings Unit

Department of Children and Family Services

406 E. Monroe St., Station 15

Springfield, IL 62701

217-782-6655

* The Service Appeal Process is reviewed annually with case management staff and is offered as a training to caregivers annually.

**Court Hearing Notification**

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

* Case managers inform caregivers of the date, time, location, court docket numbers, and name of the judge or hearing officer either verbally or by use of the Notification of Scheduled Meetings form.
* Caregivers are notified that they have a right to be heard in court during certain court proceedings. Caregivers in Cook County are asked to sign the Notice to Foster Parents form if they choose not to be involved in court proceedings.
* While recognizing that not all courts honor a caregivers right to be heard, Brightpoint will continue to provide caregivers with court information, and encourage their attendance, which can provide an opportunity for them to advocate on the child/youth’s behalf.
* Case managers inform caregivers who were not present in court, verbally or in writing within 48 hours of all major decisions made by the court that impact the child/youth or their care. Case managers also share information regarding the next court hearing.

**Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care**

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

* The DCFS electronic system is checked to explore previous placements.
* Previous caregivers are always considered as a placement option for a child/youth re-entering the foster care system taking into consideration availability and the impact of other children in the home. Placement decisions are always based upon the best interests of the child/youth. Other factors considered in placement decisions are siblings, relative and fictive kin.
* The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool and supervision are also used to determine the best placement option for a child/youth.
* Caregivers may write a letter to the agency requesting consideration should a future resource be needed for a child/youth previously placed in their home.

**Timely Access to Service Appeal System**

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

* Brightpoint’s intake packet includes the Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities, Statement of Confidentiality, and Grievance Procedure for Violations of the Foster Parent Law. These documents along with the DCFS Service Appeal brochure are explained and provided to caregivers as part of the licensing process.
* The grievance/appeal procedures will also be provided to caregivers at their request, or at the time of an incident, or when a caregiver is dissatisfied with decisions concerning them or a child/youth placed with them. Support staff are also available to assist caregivers with the process if needed
* The Brightpoint’s grievance/appeal states that there will be no retaliation for filing a grievance/complaint, and caregivers have the right to receive grievance/appeal procedures in writing when services are initiated with Brightpoint.
* The DCFS Service Appeal Process brochure is provided to and explained to caregivers during the licensing process, at Administrative Case Reviews, when a grievance is made, and/or upon request.

**Foster Parent Hotline**

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

* + Brightpoint provides caregivers with a list of resources/phone numbers, including:
* Statewide numbers such as Inspector General, Advocacy Office, Foster Parent Hotline, DCFS Hotline and Medical Consent Unit.
* Local numbers: names and phone numbers for Brightpoint worker, supervisor and program manager/director, and after hours/emergency numbers.
  + Caregivers receive this information at placement, during licensure, at ACRs, in the newsletters, and upon request.
  + The Caregiver Support team is available to assist caregivers with advocacy and resources.

**FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES. A foster parent’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:**

**Open Communication**

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

* Caregivers are encouraged to share information about the child/youth’s strengths and needs with staff and other members of the team in a timely and comprehensive manner which is used in assessing the best possible services for the child.
* Caregivers areoffered training in open communication in Foster Adopt/PRIDE and/or agency sponsored training.
* Brightpoint case manager solicits information from caregivers during home visits by asking questions, actively listening, modeling open communication, and documenting the content of the discussion in case notes.
* Caregivers are advised by case managers and licensing representatives, and trained in PRIDE, of the importance of notifying staff of any significant event involving the child/youth within 24 hours.
* Brightpoint encourages shared parenting principles which promote and support open communication between caregivers and parents in order to strengthen the quality of care for children.
  + Utilizing Shared Parenting Agreements
  + Shared Parenting Meetings
  + Peer encouragement

**Confidentiality**

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

* Confidentiality is included in the PRIDE pre-service training curriculum.
* Caregivers receive a copy of Brightpoint’s Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality, specifically developed for caregivers at the time of licensure with copies available as needed. This statement references the various laws and regulations covering confidentiality, including:
* Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act
* Illinois Administrative Act 431
* Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services
* Health Information for Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH)
* Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
* As part of the intake process, licensing representatives review the Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality in detail with caregivers emphasizing the expectation of respecting and safeguarding confidential information about the families and children in their care.
* Caregivers are provided a copy of the Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality and sign that they received, reviewed, and understand the information. The Welcome Packet Signature Page indicates staff are available to answer any questions caregivers may have.
* Licensing staff continue to stress the importance of maintaining confidential information on children and their families during six-month monitoring visits.
* At the time of placement, the placing worker provides background information regarding the family and child/youth and discusses the guidelines of confidentiality with caregivers.
* Case managers review confidentiality guidelines periodically with caregivers, and address issues, concerns, and questions as needed.
* Licensing representatives and case managers will provide copies of the laws and regulations covering confidentiality upon request.

**Advocating for Children in Care**

* 1. **The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parent’s care.**
* Caregivers are trained and expected to advocate for the child/youth’s educational, medical, dental, vision, hearing, and therapeutic needs and the importance of transporting and advocating on their behalf at various meetings and appointments.
* Caregivers are encouraged to take DCFS Educational Advocacy training as soon as possible, as this provides necessary information for navigating the educational system and advocating, and are required to complete the training prior to their first license renewal.
* Educational Liaisons through DCFS are available to assist caregivers in their role as Educational Advocates, and to train caregivers on advocating for children in an educational setting. Information regarding Educational Liaisons is included annually in the Statewide Caregiver Newsletter**.**
* On an ongoing basis, Brightpoint case managers encourage caregivers to participate in all aspects of services provided to the child/youth in their care including acting as Educational Advocates, participating in school meetings, Integrated Assessments (IA), Service Planning, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), DCFS Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings, and Court Hearings.
* Caregivers learn about the Juvenile Court System during PRIDE training, and Brightpoint also provides training on understanding the “Juvenile Court Process” which also includes general guidelines for attending court.
* Case managers also provide ongoing instruction to caregivers on their role within the juvenile court process and other important meeting throughout service delivery.
* PRIDE training addresses caregiver’s right to appeal decisions regarding children/youth in their care.
* The DCFS Service Appeal Process brochures are available from Brightpoint and staff are available to assist caregivers if they wish to file an appeal.
* Caregivers may be invited to be involved in advocating on behalf of general foster care issues.
* The ARC trauma initiative helps caregivers become more informed on how trauma impacts a child/youth’s behaviors and assists caregivers in developing appropriate skills to respond. This knowledge helps caregivers advocate confidently for the child/youth in their care with case managers, community providers, schools, therapists, etc.
* Information about the responsibility to advocate can be found in the Caregiver Contract signed annually with the caregiver’s licensing worker.

**Treating Children and Families with Dignity and Respect**

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

* PRIDE training includes instruction on the ramifications of negative comments made by caregivers about the child/youth or their family, and of the importance of caregivers working together with families.
* Brightpoint promotes shared parenting at informational meetings and orientation and explains the caregiver’s role in working and supporting parents and families.
* Brightpoint supports and promotes shared parenting between caregivers and parents by providing Support staff that model, train and support caregivers in Shared Parenting.
* Brightpoint staff role model treating children, youth, families, and caregivers with dignity and respect. Caregivers demonstrate dignity and respect through a variety of activities and behaviors, such as:
* Recognizing the child/youth and their family as members of a team, whose voice and input is equal to their own.
* Strongly advocating for the child/youth’s connection with their family, which includes supporting and sometimes coaching/supervising contact and visitation.
* Recognizing the importance of the family to the child/youth in their care.
* Developing a relationship with the parents/family that include invitations to the child/youth’s events, activities, and medical appointments.
* Sharing information about the child/youth (directly or indirectly) with the parents/family such as their physical, emotional, medical, developmental, or educational functioning.
* Recognizing derogatory comments regarding the child/youth or family are not in the child’s best interest*.*
* Licensing staff review the Foster Home Licensing Standards with caregivers at the time of licensure and renewal, which includes discussion on treating children/youth and their families with dignity and respect.
* Licensing staff will review and have caregivers sign the Traditional Caregiver Contract or UHMR (Unlicensed Home of Relative) Caregiver Contract, which contains expectations for caregivers to participate in Shared Parenting.

**Foster Parent Strengths and Weaknesses**

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

* As part of the licensing process, the licensing representative conducts a thorough assessment with the caregiver regarding the age, gender, and needs of children/youth the caregiver feels equipped to handle.
* To assist the agency in making the best match possible, the agency assesses the caregiver’s strengths and limitations prior to placement.
* Upon placement and throughout service delivery, the agency suggests training opportunities tailored to the needs of the caregivers specific to the child/youth in their care.
* Ongoing assessment with the caregiver, support specialist, licensing representative, and/or case manager is provided to assist in determining ongoing training and support services needed by the caregiver.
* When a caregiver requests specific training/support, or when it is identified as a need, the support specialist, licensing representative, and/or case manager will assist in locating the necessary services or training.
* The Caregiver Support team will complete an individualized Support Plan with the caregiver to identify quarterly goals to improve support of the caregiver, as well as the caregivers capacity regarding the Protective Factors.

**Affiliations with Foster Parent Associations**

1. **The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliation with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.**

* Brightpoint program staff encourage caregivers to seek support from other caregivers and to share supportive information at support groups, foster parent advisory meetings, and at other Brightpoint events and activities. Brightpoint is a member of the National Foster Parent Association. Caregivers can join by:
* Calling 800 557-5238
* On-line at [www.nfpainc.org](http://www.nfpainc.org)
* Caregivers may join the Illinois Foster Parent/Adoptive Parent Association:
* On-line at [www.ilfapa.org](http://www.ilfapa.org)
  + Caregivers can also receive information about foster parenting from Foster Care Central:
  + On-line at [www.fostercarecentral.org](http://www.fostercarecentral.org)
* Support groups and trainings are offered and assist caregivers in building relationships and supports with other caregivers.

**Foster Parent Training Needs**

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

* The training needs of caregivers are assessed through discussion with caregivers and their licensing specialist, case manager, and/or support specialist.
* Training is based on: Type of care provided – traditional or specialized foster care
* Age of child/youth
* Individual needs of the child/youth
* Caregivers needs in understanding and caring for the child/youth
* Required trainings to maintain licensure
* Areas of interest to caregivers
* Discussion of training needs can occur at any time; however, training is discussed as part of each semi-annual licensing monitoring visit. Identified training needs are documented on the Family Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Record (CFS 597).
* The Foster Parent Training Credit Approval Form (CFS 574) is provided to caregivers to ensure they receive proper credit for training.
* Brightpoint staff inform caregivers of available local, state and national trainings.
* Brightpoint provide internal and external training opportunities in the Statewide Caregiver Newsletter. Caregivers can also access DCFS training schedules through: [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org)
* Caregivers are encouraged to notify their licensing representative if they need assistance in locating a specific training. Brightpoint will continue to offer, assist, and develop necessary training for caregivers.
* Caregivers will agree in the Caregiver contracts to regular participation in training and meet all DCFS training requirements:
  + 16 training hours every 4 years for license renewal. Caregivers are encouraged to take 4 hours of training each year.
  + For children/youth in specialized foster care, caregivers are required to have 12 training hours every year in addition to the training hours that are required for license renewal.
  + For children/youth in the sibling foster care program, caregivers are required to complete 32 hours of training per year.
  + Caregivers who have been approved for an expanded capacity are required to take 9 additional training hours per year.

**Strategies to Prevent Placement Disruption**

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

* Case managers assess children/youth in placement at each home visit for any issues that may create problems for the foster family or might put the placement at risk of disruption. Caregivers are encouraged to contact the case manager or supervisor if a problem occurs between scheduled visits to the foster home.
* Caregivers are encouraged to honestly communicate to the case manager, supervisor, or licensing representative any concerns related to a child/youth in their home when concerns first arise.
* When an issue with the placement is identified, the case manager seeks supervision. The case manager may also request a staffing with the clinical team, which includes the caregivers as an important part of the group, to discuss the problems and develop a plan of action.
* The case manager accesses necessary services to stabilize the placement, such as counseling, respite, Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS), contact with the caregiver support specialist and referral to the Support program.
* As necessary, referrals will be made for the child/youth to receive appropriate assessments in an effort to identify issues and strategies to support the child/youth and preserve the placement.
* Caregivers receive the ARC Skill of the month and training to understand the impact of trauma associated with placement disruptions in hopes of developing skills to better respond to children/youth with trauma histories and reduce the number of placement disruptions.
* Caregivers are offered training on the types of support and stabilization services available, which might include Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS), respite, Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation (CIPP), etc.
* Case managers ensure caregivers know how to access support services by providing contact information.
* Caregivers are encouraged to participate in:
  + Placement Stabilization Services with the child/youth
  + CIPP meetings (Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation)
  + Agency and/or community sponsored support groups and trainings
  + Individual or group consultations
* Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings are held to determine if a child/youth should be stepped up to specialized foster care. The IPS worker also participates and provides recommendations on services that may assist in stabilizing the placement.
* If efforts to maintain the placement are unsuccessful, case managers, supervisors, and licensing staff work with the caregivers and child/youth to provide a smooth transition into a new home. Caregivers are encouraged to be as sensitive as possible to children/youth during the time of transition, so the best interests of both the child and caregivers can be considered in ensuring a successful transition.
* Counseling and/or other support services are offered to children/youth when they are moved to assist them with the transition.
* Except when an emergency or safety situation prevents advance notice, Brightpoint requests caregivers provide verbal and written notification at least 14 days prior to a requested placement change.

**Acknowledge/Minimize Stress**

1. **The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to endeavor** **to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.**

* Caregivers are taught during PRIDE classes and ongoing trainings about the potential stressors associated with foster parenting. They are also taught to be aware of these stressors, and the importance of seeking assistance to deal with stress before a crisis occurs.
* Case managers inform caregivers about available support groups and encourage them to utilize their caregiver support specialist for additional support.
* Caregiver peer support is available to all newly licensed caregivers and act as a support and knowledge base during the first few years of licensure.

### Caregivers who share issues of stress may do so with assurance of confidentiality.

* Caregivers may request a voluntary placement hold for placements in times of personal stress. A “voluntary hold” may then be placed on a home when the caregiver determines it would be in the best interests of their family not to take additional placements for a period of 4 weeks.
* Inactive Status- A request to be moved to inactive status can be requested after 4 weeks of a voluntary hold. Inactive status prevents new placements but does require that the foster home maintains their licensing requirements (training hours, home safety, and DCFS 402 standards) during this time.
* The case manager and licensing representative look for signs of stress during home visits and will encourage caregivers to do something special for themselves or take a break from foster parenting when appropriate.
* All specialized caregivers are advised of the agencies respite policy. Respite needs are assessed with the case manager and a respite plan is created. The case manager encourages caregivers use their respite plans.
* Under certain circumstances case managers may assist traditional caregivers in times of stress by arranging for the child/youth to stay in a different foster home for a short period of time.
* When resources allow, and where the situation warrants, a therapist may be assigned to help caregivers deal with the stress of foster parenting.
* Case managers will refer a child/youth and caregivers to IPS for additional support to minimize stress within the home. IPS services includes a worker, therapist, or mentor in hopes of stabilizing the placement.
* Using the ARC model, caregivers will be educated by agency staff on the building blocks of the ARC model, which include components such as caregiver affect management. Caregiver affect management is all about how caregivers manage their emotions, provide self-care, and use healthy and effective coping skills.
* The use of the Caregiver Support Plan allows for continual improvement of the caregivers supports, and knowledge regarding their caregiver role.
* The Family Support team is comprised of caregiver support specialists, and leadership members that have lived experience as foster caregivers and use these experiences to ensure the experiences of caregivers is considered in foster care decisions to aide in minimizing stress for caregivers.
* Two times per year a caregiver satisfaction survey is provided to all caregivers throughout the organization, the results of the survey are reviewed with all regional child welfare leaders to aide in continual feedback of the services received and needed.

**Promotion of Foster Parenting**

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

* Caregivers are encouraged to read the Caregiver Newsletters to stay informed of events, activities, trainings, and meetings of Brightpoint, DCFS and other local agencies.
* Brightpoint staff encourages communities and businesses to give special recognition to caregivers.
* Brightpoint caregivers areencouraged to be involved with local groups and organizations whose primary role is to recruit and retain foster parents and promote fostering as a valued lifestyle.
* Brightpoint invites and encourages caregivers to participate in agency wide and community events and activities as a support to caregivers.
* Information from caregivers is used to improve our recruitment and retention of caregivers.
* Caregivers receive financial incentives when a potential foster parent is referred, licensed, and accepts their first placement.
* Caregivers are encouraged to participate in various recruitment events and share their stories and experiences in videos, informational meetings, and orientations.
* Brightpoint’s Statewide Recruitment Plan includes mandatory meaningful connections training for all employees.
* All caregivers and staff wishing to represent the agency will receive training in recruiting and promoting foster parenting.
* Caregivers are invited to actively participate with the agency’s public policy action team to aid in improving the laws surrounding child welfare in Illinois, and to learn self and community advocacy skills.

**Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of Child Welfare Team**

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

* As part of Intake with Brightpoint, caregivers receive the agencies Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities, Statement of Confidentiality, and Grievance Procedure for Violations of the Foster Parent Law.
* The Brightpoint caregiver job description specifies the caregiver’s roles and responsibilities. It is provided to caregivers at the time of licensure and is available upon their request.
* Caregivers are also provided a one-page abbreviated version of their rights and responsibilities for a quick reference. This will be provided to caregivers on an annual basis with the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.
* Brightpoint licensing staff ensure caregivers attend Foster/Adopt PRIDE or other agency sponsored training in order to be informed of the Child Welfare Teams roles, rights, and responsibilities.
* Case managers, licensing representatives, and support specialists explain the roles of other professionals involved in the child/youth’s life with caregivers on an ongoing basis.
* Brightpoint’s digital training platform includes trainings created by parents and caregivers.
* Formal input is sought from caregivers annually for strengthening the foster care programs and services. Caregivers also participate annually in surveys and meetings to development, review, and endorse the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.
* To help ensure caregivers are knowledgeable of the Foster Parents Rights and Responsibilities, a copy is provided at Monitoring visits with assigned licensing staff.
* DCFS Rule 402, Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes also assists caregivers in understanding their roles and responsibilities and is shared with caregivers by licensing staff on an ongoing basis. Included in the 402 standards the caregivers should be aware of is around additional clearances for youth in the home at the 13-year and 18-year milestones:
* Individuals 18 years of age or older: a criminal history check via fingerprints that are submitted to the Illinois State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for comparison to their criminal history records, as appropriate
* Individuals 13 years of age or older: a check of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) and other state child protection systems, as appropriate, to determine whether an individual is currently alleged or has been indicated as a perpetrator of child abuse or neglect; and a check of the Illinois Sex Offender Registry.
* Case managers review and share The Illinois Foster Child and Youth Bill of Rights (CFS 496-1) with children/youth in care on an annual basis and caregivers are asked to sign for children under five.

**Mandated Reporter Responsibility**

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

* The role and responsibility of being a mandated reporter is explained to caregivers during the licensing process, PRIDE training, and through Mandated Reporter training provided by DCFS. These trainings include the responsibilities of being a mandated reporter and what to expect if allegations are made against a caregiver.
* PRIDE training also provides information on the applicable rules and regulations involved if there are allegations of abuse or neglect against a caregiver. These rules and regulations can be found in DCFS policy and procedure 300, which will be provided upon request. If a caregiver has questions, the licensing worker, supervisor, or the Advocacy Office can assist.
* As a Mandated Reporter, the Child Abuse Hotline number is provided to caregivers and used when they believe a child/youth is a victim of abuse or neglect:
* 1 800 25-ABUSE (1 800 252-2873)
* Caregivers sign the Mandated Reporter Acknowledgment form before a child is placed in their home. The licensing representative is responsible for explaining the obligations of a Mandated Reporter and obtaining the caregivers signatures on the Acknowledgment form.
* If allegations of abuse or neglect are made against a caregiver, an internal and/or DCFS investigation will be conducted as outlined in Right 6, Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations.

**Administrative Case Reviews and Court Hearings**

1. **The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes, as well as filing or time requirements associated with those proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent’s designated role in these proceedings.**

* Case managers and licensing representatives emphasize the importance of caregivers attending and participating in the Integrated Assessment, service planning, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR’s), and court proceedings during home visits, and notifies caregivers of these events throughout service delivery.
* The Caregiver Newsletter also emphasizes the importance of caregivers participation and role in these important case milestones.
* Caregivers receive ongoing training/information on the purpose and timelines of various service processes.
* The online digital training for parents and caregivers includes a specific training regarding the Juvenile Court Process.
* Case managers involve caregivers in the permanency planning for the child/youth by including them in important case milestones and addressing barriers.
* Caregivers are also encouraged to maintain contact with the child/youth’s Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) with court hearings or concerns.
* Caregivers receive mailed notification of scheduled Administrative Case Review every six months and should contact the case manager if they do not receive notice.

**Appeals Systems**

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

* The grievanceprocedure clearly defines the procedures for filing a complaint/grievance. There are three types of grievances caregivers can file. If a caregiver is not sure which process should be followed, the case manager or licensing staff should be contacted for assistance.

1. **Licensing Grievance/Appeal**

If a caregiver wishes to make a complaint/appeal in relation to a foster home licensing issue/decision, they should follow DCFS procedure for appealing licensing decisions. This procedure is available to caregivers in the DCFS Foster Parent Manual or from Brightpoint staff members upon request.

1. **Service Plan Appeal**

If a caregiver has an objection to the child/youth’s DCFS Client Service Plan or services involving the child/youth, they should follow the DCFS procedure for a Service Appeal. An explanation of this process is available from the Administrative Case Reviewer, case manager, or DCFS Foster Parent Manual.

1. **Brightpoint Foster Parent Grievance Procedure**

If a caregiver believes they are being treated unfairly, or one or more of their rights have been violated, they have the right to address their concerns with agency staff and/or file a grievance. If necessary, the caregiver may have their concerns heard by the President of Brightpoint. Certain procedures must be followed in the grievance process.  **This grievance policy is to be used by caregivers only for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. It cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.**

#### Informal Grievance Procedure

*Step One: Address issue with the Licensing Representative or Case Manager:*

If an issue or concern arises, the caregiver should first address concerns with the licensing representative or case manager. If the issue cannot be resolved at that time, the direct supervisor should be contacted.

*Step Two: Address issue with the next level supervisor:*

If the issue cannot be settled with the first level of staff, the caregiver should contact the next level supervisor (Foster Care Manager, or Program Director). This may be done over the telephone, in writing, or in person. The next level supervisor may wish to call a "staffing" (meeting with all concerned parties) to resolve the situation with the caregiver and others involved.

#### Formal Grievance Procedure

If the informal process proves to be inadequate, then the procedure outlined in the Brightpoint Foster Parent Grievance Procedure is to be followed. Caregivers receive the grievance & appeal procedures from their licensing representative and aregiven the opportunity to discuss it with agency staff.

* At the time of licensure, the caregiver isasked to sign a document indicating the appeal and grievance procedure has been received and discussed.
* Caregivers wishing to file a grievance may request assistance from Brightpoint staff.
* The Foster Parent Grievance Procedure, Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality, Rights and Responsibilities, and the OIGBrochure aredistributed to all caregivers at the time of licensure and will be re-distributed as needed and upon request.
* The Office of Inspector General (OIG) addresses complaints from the general public concerning child welfare services. The OIG brochure will be included with the Grievance Policy & Procedure and other materials that are distributed to newly licensed caregivers*.*
* The Brightpoint Foster Parent Grievance Procedure can be located on the agency’s website under Foster Parent Resources at:
* www.brightpoint.org

**Accurate and Complete Records**

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

* At the time of placement, the caregiver receivesa Child/Youth Record Folder for each child placed in the home. The case manager, licensing representative or support staff provides training and direction on the importance of maintaining required documentation regarding the child/youth’s physical, emotional, developmental, and educational needs.
* The Child/Youth Record Folder includes a list of information or documentation required by Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, and instructions on maintaining records for children/youth in care. The folder also contains important contact numbers for Brightpoint and other resources, medical providers, educational information, etc.
* Records maintained by caregivers are reviewed by case managers regularly and licensing specialist during the semiannual compliance visit.
* Caregivers receive a copy of the 906 Placement Authorization Form following placement of a child/youth to aid in school registration and accessing services. The 906 is to be maintained in the Child/Youth Record Folder.
* All child/youth in care are required to be photographed and fingerprinted to help aid in their safety; caregivers will assist in the process.
* Caregivers are encouraged to assist the youth with completing their Life Book to aide in accurate record keeping.

**Communication with Subsequent Caregivers**

1. **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 adjustment in the foster parent’s home.**

* Caregivers maintain significant information on the child/youth on an ongoing basis. When there is a placement transition, staff solicits the Child/Youth Record Folder and gathers any other important information or documentation from the caregiver to share with the new family. Brightpoint staff strongly encourages direct communication/sharing of information between the caregiver and the next placement whether it be with the family of origin or a new placement.
* This responsibility is shared and discussed with caregivers during the licensing study, Foster/Adopt PRIDE and during pre-placement activities.
* Caregivers are encouraged to assist the youth with completing their Life Book to aide in accurate record keeping.
* Participation in the Shared Parenting Meeting with the youth’s parent/s is encouraged in order to ensure accurate records are shared and a plan to continue exists.

**Cultural Sensitivity**

1. **The responsibility to provide care and services that are respective of and responsive to the child’s cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his or her own family; the responsibility to recognize the increased importance of 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.**

* The need to be culturally sensitive and responsible isdiscussed and explored by the licensing specialist during the assessment and licensing process, in support groups, contacts with the case manager, through Foster/Adopt PRIDE training, and ongoing agency trainings.
* Brightpoint case managers provide resources and support to caregivers and the child/youth when placing a child of a different race or culture in a home.
* Brightpoint staff solicits information from caregivers on an ongoing basis to determine any stressors which may be present and plan for a course of action.
* Brightpoint’s Family Finding specialists will work with caregivers and parents to identify cultural and familial supports for youth and families.
* Caregivers are encouraged to participate in internal or external diversity training.
* The Caregiver Newsletter provides notification of training and resources on cultural sensitivity for caregivers on a regular basis.
* Brightpoint is recognized by the Human Rights Campaign as an All Children All Families Child Welfare Agency, and a leader in supporting and serving LGBTQ youth and families.
* Caregivers are assessed in the support plan on if additional resources are needed regarding cultural components between the caregiver youth.
* Caregivers and Parents discuss cultural components and shared parenting supports regarding culture during the Shared Parenting Meeting.