

Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities

A simple guide for foster parents and caregivers

THE MAIN IDEA

Foster parents are important members of the child welfare team. You have rights that help you care for children and responsibilities that help the team work well.

Your Questions, Answered

Why does Illinois have a Foster Parent Law?

The law explains the rights and responsibilities of foster parents. DCFS and private child welfare agencies must make yearly plans to give foster parents the information and support they need to take part in the child welfare team.

How should I be treated?

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

What training and support should I receive?

- Standard training before you begin and ongoing training based on your needs
- Information about whom to contact for help and supportive services
- Training needed to meet a child's hair-care needs

Do I have a right to financial reimbursement?

Yes. You have the right to timely reimbursement that matches the child's care needs listed in the service plan.

What should I know about a child's placement plan?

You have the right to a clear written explanation of the agency's plan for the child placed in your home. You also have a responsibility to support the child's permanency goal, relationships with the child's family, and cultural heritage.

What rights do I have during a licensing complaint investigation?

- A fair, timely, and impartial investigation
- A person of your choice present during the investigation
- Due process
- The chance to request mediation, an administrative review, or both
- A clear explanation of any corrective action plan and the licensing standards involved

What information should I receive about a child?

Before placement, when possible, the worker should give you available written information needed to care for the child. This includes:

- Medical history, known health concerns or communicable diseases, immunizations, and medical card information
- School history and special education needs, including an IEP, IFSP, or 504 Plan when applicable
- The child's part of the service plan, visitation plan, case history, legal status, permanency goal, placement history, and reasons placements changed
- Relevant background information, including criminal history, behavior concerns, substance use, likes, and dislikes

Information about past placements should not identify a previous foster or relative caregiver or reveal that caregiver's location.

What happens if the placement is an emergency?

If not all information is available, the worker should share what is known as it becomes available and later provide it in writing. The worker may give you a written summary before placement.

Can I take part in meetings and case planning?

Yes. You have the right to notice of meetings and staffings about the child, including service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and education planning meetings. You may take part in decisions, give input, and have your input considered like information from other team professionals.

Can I communicate with the child's professionals?

Yes. Within the child welfare team, you may communicate with people who work with the child, including therapists, doctors, other health professionals, and teachers.

What information may I receive about the child's family?

Family information is limited to what you need to understand and care for the child. The family may agree to share more information when a positive relationship exists. Family information is confidential and should not be shared with anyone outside of the family team.

Will I be told if the case plan or placement will change?

You have the right to reasonable written notice of a case-plan change or a plan to end the placement, including the reasons. Notice may be waived only by court order or when the child is at immediate risk of harm.

What court information should I receive?

You have the right to timely and complete notice of court hearings. The notice should include the date, time, judge or hearing officer, location, and court docket number. The law also gives foster parents the right to intervene in court proceedings or seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.

Can I be considered if a former foster child returns to care?

Yes. You have the right to be considered as a placement option if it is in the best interests of that child and the other children in your home.

What rights do I have if I appeal a decision?

You have the right to timely access to the placement agency's appeal process. You also have the right to be free from harassment or retaliation for appealing.

What is the Foster Parent Hotline?

You have the right to information about the hotline and how to report misconduct by DCFS employees, service providers, or contractors. Reports should be handled confidentially and may be investigated by the Inspector General. Foster Parent Hotline: **800-722-9124**.

What are my main responsibilities as a foster parent?

- Provide a safe, stable home for the child
- Share information openly with the child welfare team
- Protect private information about the child and family
- Advocate for the child
- Treat the child and the child's family with dignity and respect

What should I consider before accepting a placement?

Be honest about your own strengths, limits, family needs, and support needs. Use appropriate support while caring for a child.

How should I keep learning and finding support?

- Connect with other foster parents and foster parent groups
- Review your training needs and take steps to meet them
- Know how foster parenting may affect you and your family, and try to reduce stress
- Understand the benefits of foster parenting and speak about the experience in a positive way
- Contact the Foster Parent Helpline (866-368-5204)

What should I do to help prevent a placement disruption?

Work with the team on ways to prevent disruption and understand that a move can be traumatic for the child and foster family. If a disruption happens, provide emotional support to the child and family members.

What rules and processes should I understand?

- The roles, rights, and responsibilities of foster parents, professionals, the child, and the child's family
- Your duty as a mandated reporter and the agency process for allegations against foster parents
- Administrative case reviews, service plans, court processes, deadlines, and your role in them

- The agency's foster parent appeal process and your rights within it.

What records should I keep?

Keep accurate, useful records of the child's history, progress, medication administration, behavior charts, and financial allowances. Follow the rules and procedures of the agency that licenses or works with you.

What information should I share when the child moves?

Through the child welfare team, share information with the next caregiver - whether that is the child's parent or another caregiver - about how the child adjusted in your home.

How should I support the child's culture and family relationships?

Provide care that respects the child's culture and supports the child's relationship with family. This is especially important when your race or culture differs from the child's. Provide hair care that supports the child's connection to race, culture, gender, religion, and identity, and take action when these needs are not being met.

Words You May Hear

Administrative review: A formal review of an agency decision.

Guardian ad litem or GAL: The court-appointed person who represents the child's best interests.

Mandated reporter: A person who must report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Mandamus: A court action asking a public official or agency to perform a required legal duty.

Placement disruption: An unplanned end to a foster placement.

Where can I learn more?

See Illinois DCFS Rules 340.40 and 340.50 and the Foster Parent Law, 20 ILCS 520.

Important: This guide summarizes the Foster Parent Code dated September 24, 2026. It gives general information and is not legal advice. Ask your licensing worker or attorney about your situation.