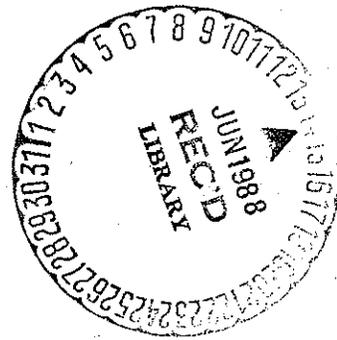


NEW YORK STATE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

40 NORTH PEARL STREET, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243-0001

CESAR A. PERALES
Commissioner



INFORMATIONAL LETTER

TRANSMITTAL NO: 88 INF-40

TO: Commissioners of Social Services
Executive Directors

DIVISION: Family and Children
Services

SUBJECT: The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual

DATE: June 1, 1988

SUGGESTED
DISTRIBUTION:

Child Placement Agencies
Child Welfare Supervisors
Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON:

Any questions concerning this release should be directed to Frederic H. Cantlo, Regional Director, Metropolitan Regional Office, telephone 212-804-1198; John O'Connor, Regional Director, Albany Regional Office, telephone 518-432-2751; Linda Brown, Acting Regional Director, Buffalo Regional Office, telephone 716-847-3145; Frank Petrus, Regional Director, Rochester Regional Office, telephone 716-238-8200; Jack Klump, Regional Director, Syracuse Regional Office, telephone 315-428-3235.

I. Purpose

This release has two purposes. The first is to notify authorized agencies that a copy of The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual may be ordered from the Department.

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Department Regs.	Social Services Law and Other Legal References	Manual References	Miscellaneous Reference
		443.3(p)			

The second purpose is to advise agencies that the Manual is intended to be used for making whatever number of copies are needed to supply each foster home with its own agency manual.

II. Background

The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual replaces A Manual for Foster Parents that was distributed in 1983 to facilitate compliance with regulation 18 NYCRR Section 443.3:

- (p) "Authorized agencies shall provide each foster family boarding home with a manual that summarizes all current agency policies and procedures that have some direct or indirect bearing upon the role and responsibility of a foster parent."

Sufficient copies of the 1983 manual were mailed to all authorized agencies to insure the manual's distribution to all foster homes that were certified at that time.

III. Program Implications

- A. The content and scope of The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual complies with 18 NYCRR section 443.3(p) provided each authorized agency adds the information specified in the sections of the Manual entitled: "Agency's Policy on Visiting", "Procedures for Emergencies", "County Resources for Foster Parents", and "Local Policies and Procedures". If available, include information about group insurance programs for foster parents that provide protection for property damage and injuries caused by foster children.
- B. Distribution of an agency foster parent manual to all foster parents can be expected to strengthen foster parent-agency relationships and to improve an agency's foster family boarding home program.

IV. Recommended Actions

- A. Obtain a binder copy of The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual from the Department's Forms and Publications Unit. The pages in the binder copy are to be used for making the copies of each agency's own foster parent manual. (Use order form DSS 876 Request for Forms and Publications. Binder copies of the Manual are expected to be ready on or about September 1, 1988.)

- 1. Orders are limited to one copy per agency except for the following social services districts:

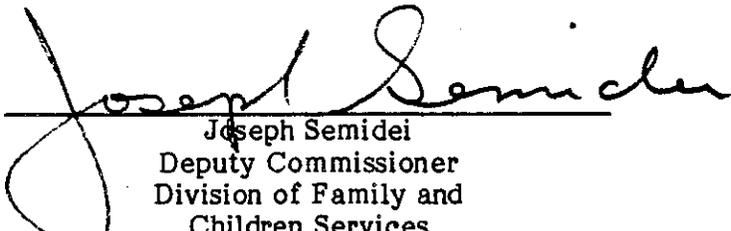
Maximum Order

Erie County	3
Monroe County	3
Nassau County	3
New York City Special Services for Children	5
Onondaga County	3
Suffolk County	3
Westchester County	3

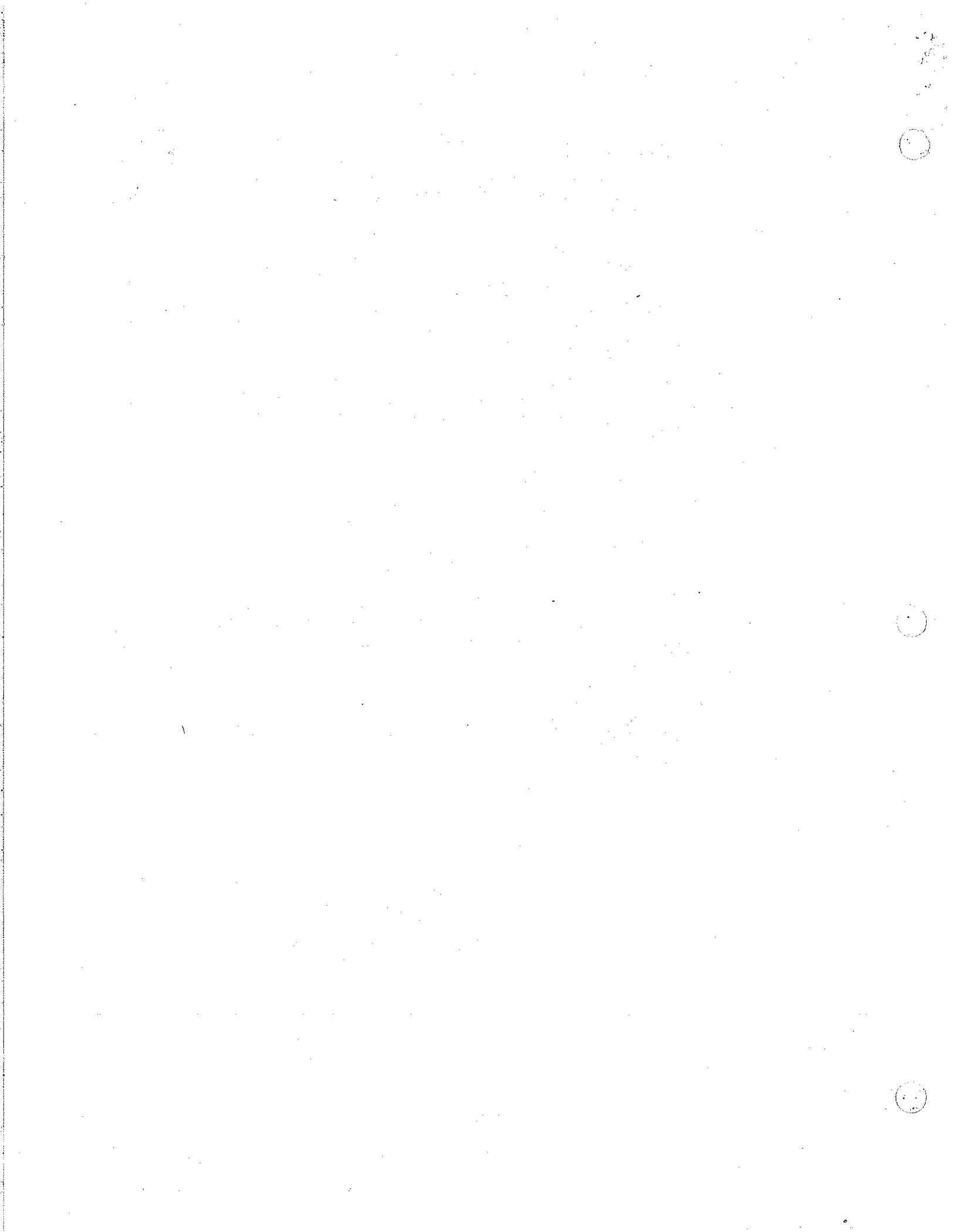
- B. In developing the agency's own foster parent manual add information specified in the sections entitled "Agency Policy on Visiting", "Procedures for Emergencies", "County Resources for Foster Parents", and "Local Policies and Procedures" that are in The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual.
- C. Add a letter page to each agency foster parent manual addressed to the individual foster parent from the agency's executive director or commissioner. The letter page could precede the Introduction. The main purpose of the letter page is to convey to each foster parent the importance of the manual and the agency's appreciation of the services provided by foster parents.
- D. When the agency representative presents the agency's mandated foster parent manual to foster parents allow them an ample opportunity to review it and to discuss any questions they have about its purpose or content.
- E. Provide each foster home with a separate copy of the agency's foster parent manual at the time of agency approval or certification of the home or earlier if feasible.
- F. Attach a red index tab to the page with emergency telephone numbers.

V. Additional Information

- A. Appendix A is a copy of a suggested letter page for The 1988 Foster Parent Manual. Appendix B is a copy of The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual.
- B. Contact a Regional Office for technical assistance and consultation regarding any issue that may arise over the use of The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual in developing the agency's own foster parent manual.



Joseph Semidei
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Family and
Children Services



Appendix A

Suggested Letter Page
For the Foster Parent Manual

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____:

On behalf of the entire staff of the _____
it is my pleasure to present you with your own personal copy of The Foster
Parent Manual.

I believe it will prove to be highly useful to you in many ways. In particular, it will help you in understanding the agency's policies and procedures and the role of the foster parent. I am confident you will find it a useful source of guidance and information.

Your generous service as a foster parent is deeply appreciated by the agency and the community. It is gratifying to know that more than ever the public is aware of how indispensable foster parents are for a strong and effective children's services program.

Sincerely yours,

Commissioner or Executive Director



Appendix B

THE 1988 MODEL FOSTER PARENT MANUAL

**New York State
Department of Social Services**

April, 1988

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the first comprehensive manuals for foster parents in New York State was developed during the nineteen seventies by the Erie County Department of Social Services with the active and enthusiastic support of the United Foster Parent Organization of Erie County. Sections of that manual were used later by SUNYA in 1983 when it developed A Manual for Foster Parents. Copies of that manual were distributed by the Department throughout New York State. Work on The 1988 Model was made easier for Department staff by using material from the two earlier manuals.

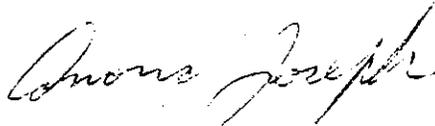
Several other sections in The 1988 Model are based on ideas taken from the Foster Parent Handbook issued in 1985 by the New Jersey Division for Youth and Family Services and from Charles R. Horejsi's 1979 book, Foster Family Care.

We appreciated the assistance of Marge Connors at Child and Family Services of Erie County and Barbara Lynch at the Albany County Department of Social Services in reviewing drafts of The 1988 Model. Their comments added substance to the manual and improved its content and scope.

Professional staff from the New York State Department of Social Services contributing to The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual included: Eleanor Blakely, Linda Brown, Charles Carson, Jean Felt, Gail Haulenbeek, Peter Kasius, Paul Mann, John O'Connor, Lee Prochera, Michelle Rafael, Fred Simms, and Lynne Vallone.

Acknowledgement of permission to use the pamphlets, Welcoming a New Child into Your Home and Preparing a Child to Leave Your Home, is made to the Tennessee Foster Parent Association.

Acknowledgement of permission to quote extensively from Medication Guide by Dorothy L. Smith is made to Lea and Febiger, Inc. of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Anona Joseph
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Family and Children Services
Operations

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INTRODUCTION

The Foster Parent Manual is intended to be a practical source of information for foster parents. Its scope reveals how much foster parents are expected to know and to do in caring for dependent and neglected children. The Manual's content will complement what is learned in orientation and training programs about the responsibilities and vital role of foster parents.

Four purposes are served by the Manual. It provides:

1. In one source agency policies and procedures that are important to foster parents.
2. Comprehensive information to foster parents about their responsibilities to foster children, the agency, the natural family, and the community.
3. Definitions of terms and key concepts relating to foster family care programs.
4. Guiding principles for the assessment, prevention, and resolution of problem situations involving children in foster family homes.

Implicit throughout the Manual are the following values and attitudes that characterize and energize foster family care programs:

1. A respect for each child's dignity and individuality.
2. A belief in the importance of growth and development and knowledge in working with the child.
3. A belief in the importance of positive relationships for a child's social learning and normal development.
4. An acceptance of the impact of life experiences on a child's feelings and behavior according to age and stage of development.
5. A willingness to want to understand a child.
6. A capacity to empathize with a child's struggles, sadness and joys.
7. A readiness to allow dependence and independence in a child.
8. A capacity to care about a child.

The Manual should help all foster parents in understanding their role and how it is influenced by an agency's responsibility for foster children. Although the responsibility can not be delegated, all agencies rely upon foster parents to carry out certain aspects of that responsibility. Since the foster parents of dependent children are accountable to agencies that have responsibility for their care, each child's placement in a foster home is always subject to the supervision of an agency. It is a complex arrangement involving close and cooperative working relationships for meeting the normal and special needs of children in foster family care.

Periodic review and use of the Manual is expected to help all new as well as the experienced foster parents in caring for foster children and in serving on agency foster care teams.

DEFINITIONS:

Some words and terms frequently heard but not always understood by new foster parents include the ones listed below. The list is not exhaustive; it is certain that there will be additional words and terms that foster parents and applicants would like to have defined. Foster parents should feel free to ask for definitions of any term or word that is not clear. Communication between agency staffs and foster parents is often intensive but not necessarily effective unless there is a reasonable agreement by everyone about the meaning of practice-related words and the terms that are being used.

Authorized Agency

The term refers to any agency, association, corporation, institution, society or other organization which is incorporated or organized under the laws of this state with corporate power or empowered by law to care for, to place out or to board out children, which actually has its place of business or plant in New York State and which is approved, visited, inspected and supervised by the New York State Department of Social Services or which shall submit and consent to that agency's approval, visitation, inspection and supervision with regard to any and all acts in relation to the welfare of children. It can also mean any court or any public welfare official of this state authorized by law to place out or to board out children.

Board Out

This term means to arrange for the care of a child in a family, other than that of the child's parent, step-parent or legal guardian, to whom payment is made or agreed to be made for care and maintenance.

Dependent Child

This term refers to a child who is in the custody of or wholly or partly maintained by an authorized agency or an institution, society or other organization that is charitable or reformatory in nature.

Foster Care Home Study

This term refers to (1) the investigation by authorized agencies to gather information necessary to determine if a prospective foster home can be licensed certified or approved and (2) the process whereby the information is gathered, discussed with applicants and then subsequently reviewed and evaluated. Home studies are generally assigned to staff whose positions are defined as homefinders. It is the work of the agency homefinder that makes it possible for an agency to prepare foster family applicants for their role and concurrently to determine that they meet agency standards for certification.

The home study will follow a pre-application orientation phase during which agency homefinders will help applicants to understand the implications of the agency's standards for certification and to make an informal decision regarding their own readiness and ability to adequately care for children from an authorized agency.

Reliable home studies require the involvement of applicants themselves in assessing their readiness and ability to be foster parents. Homefinders recognize that foster parents, like other people, differ from each other psychologically, educationally,

and socio-economically. There is a difference in motivations, parenting capacity, individual and family flexibility as well as expectations of foster children and agencies.

When a home study is completed and a person(s) is certified to receive a child for care in the home the agency believes, based upon what has been learned, that the person can:

- (a) provide for the physical, emotional, social, and educational needs of children who may be placed in the home;
- (b) relate to a foster child's family in a helpful way; and
- (c) work with agency staff, personnel from schools, other agencies, and community resources as necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal.

Approved Foster Homes and Certified Foster Homes

Both terms refer to homes in which temporary or long term care is provided to a child whose care and custody or guardianship and custody have been transferred to an authorized agency.

For a booklet with information about the standards that authorized agencies must follow for either approving or certifying a foster home ask an agency representative for a copy of the following: Regulations for Certified Foster Family Boarding Homes and Requirements for Licensed and Certified Foster Family Boarding Homes. The booklet is published by the New York State Department of Social Services. It is a free publication. Publication #1009A (2/87).

Reapproval and Recertification

Both these terms refer to the process that must take place when "approval" or "certification" status of a foster home expires and when the family wishes to remain eligible to receive children for foster care placement.

Publication #1009A provides information about reapproval and recertification under the headings "Annual renewal of certificates ..." and "Annual review of approved relative homes ..."

Foster Care Services

This term refers to the system that authorized agencies have established for the care and supervision of children under the age of 18 (under 21 in cases of children in foster care prior to age 21) who are removed from their own homes and placed for a temporary period in foster family homes or other foster care facilities that have been approved, certified or licensed in accordance with State law and regulations. Foster care services are based upon the following principle:

Every child has a right to continuous nurturing care and protection. A family centered society believes this can best be provided in the family setting, the child's own home whenever possible and if this is not available, or is less than adequate, then in a foster home or a group care program that provides a home like atmosphere or in an adoptive home when parental rights of guardianship and custody have been surrendered or terminated by a court order.

Initial agency services assist the child or family in understanding the policy and program of the placement agency, in knowing how agency service may benefit and strengthen family life and avoid placement, or when placement is necessary, to keep the length of a child's placement to a minimum. These services are followed by an agency assessment of the problems that had led to the referral or request for foster care, identification of a child's individualized service and placement needs, securing a judicial approval of foster care placement when required by State law, and the development of placement goals and service plans. These agency activities usually precede but may be concurrent with an agency effort to implement a tentative service plan if a child needs emergency foster care. Implementation includes the following basic casework services:

- (1) Preparation of children for placement through an exploration of their concerns, guidance of children with regard to what they may expect to happen during placement, and examinations of children to clarify their physical status and health needs.
- (2) Introduction of children to those responsible for their substitute care.
- (3) Evaluation of the adjustment of children and assistance to children as needed for coping with problems that arise during placement.
- (4) Provision of special services for children with health, emotional, or behavioral problems.
- (5) Aid to children and families in discharge and post discharge planning.

The above services include all activities that may be necessary and feasible to mobilize family resources and to utilize agency, community, educational, clinical, health, housing, rehabilitation, and legal resources for the purposes of resolving those problems that may cause children to have to remain in care and/or of removing the obstacles to placement agencies' plans to provide children with a permanent and stable family life. It may include similar activities after placement for a period up to six months when children have been returned to the home of the parents, other relations, significant others, or discharged to their own responsibility.

Foster Care Team

This term refers to the individuals, including the foster parents, who work together in behalf of a child in care. The individuals collectively are regarded as a team for their different but coordinated efforts are directed at two common goals: To ensure that each child in foster care is placed in the most suitable foster home available and receives the best planning services and support necessary to achieve permanency.

Foster parents are key members of the foster care team; others on the team will include the child, the child's parents, the child's caseworker, and other staff and professional consultants having intimate knowledge of the child's and family's problem situation.

Foster Child

This term refers to any person, in the care, custody, or guardianship of an authorized agency who is placed for temporary care.

Foster Family Care Program

This term refers to interrelated activities by an authorized agency involving the processes of foster parent recruitment, homefinding, certification, child and family assessment, permanency planning, child placement, monitoring and supervising the foster boarding homes caring for dependent children.

Foster Parent

This term refers to any person with whom a child, in the care, custody or guardianship of an authorized agency, is placed for temporary care.

Permanency Planning

This term refers to an agency's systematic process of carrying out, within a brief time-limited period, a set of goal-directed activities designed to help reunite children with their own families; or when this is not possible, to help secure for children a family life that offers continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships.

Use space below for definitions of additional terms and concepts that are learned in training.

LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR PLACEMENT: Voluntary and Non-Voluntary Placements

When a child is received for care by foster parents, the placement is considered to be either voluntary or non-voluntary, depending on whether the child has been removed from his home by the court.

When a child is placed in a foster home at the request of his parents or legal guardian, the placement is considered to be a voluntary placement. These requests are usually made when parents/guardian decide that they are temporarily unable to care for their child because of a serious medical, emotional and/or financial problem.

The parents/guardian sign a voluntary Foster Home Placement Agreement which outlines both agency's and the parent's/guardian's responsibilities for the duration of the child's placement. The parents/guardian may rescind this placement agreement at any time. When this occurs, the agency must return the child unless a court determines that the child should not be returned home because he would be at risk of being harmed.

When a court finds that a child is not receiving proper care from his parents/guardian and decides that the child should be placed out-of-home, the placement is considered to be non-voluntary. A non-voluntary placement usually occurs in situations where a child has been abused and/or neglected by a parent or guardian, or by some other person in the household.

The length of a non-voluntary placement is determined by the court and only the court can approve the child's return home.

THE GOALS OF FOSTER CARE

The right of every child to a permanent home and stable family life is a key concept in foster care practice. When children cannot be cared for by their own families, authorized agencies intervene to make it possible for children to have an opportunity for a substitute family life.

Children of all ages, after being placed in the custody of an agency, have one of the following goals:

1. To be reunited with their families or relatives;
2. To be adopted;
3. To have a stable, continuous relationship with either foster parents or child care staff, if placed in a residential/group home facility, who provide the guidance, instruction and support an adolescent will need for making the transition to independent living or adult residential care upon discharge from foster care.

The specific goal for each foster child will have implications for foster parents who receive the child for care. For the child who is to be reunited with his/her own family, the foster parent will be expected to work closely with the supervising agency, especially in planning visits that help the child to maintain and strengthen the parent-child relationship. For children who are to be adopted, the foster parents have an important role in helping the child to make the transition from the foster home to an adoptive home. For adolescent children who are to remain in foster care until they are capable of independent living, the foster parent has a crucial role in helping the child to not only acquire the knowledge, and skills but also the self-confidence that is needed for making realistic decisions and sound judgements.

BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

Orientation

Agencies are required to orient foster parent applicants to:

The social, family and personal problems that lead to family breakdown, resulting in the need for children to be placed.

The problems and reactions of children who are separated from their families.

The function of the foster family.

The responsibility of foster parents in relation to the child, the child's parents, and the agency.

The concept of permanency planning.

The authority of the social services district and the family court.

The responsibilities of the agency staff to foster families, children, and their parents.

An explanation of payment schedules for care and expenses of foster children.

Orientation will also include a discussion of the home study and the use that must be made of the statewide central register of child abuse and maltreatment. Applicants are also encouraged to ask questions during orientation and to request clarification of any agency policy, practice or procedure that is not clear.

Training of Foster Parents

After the foster parent has been certified or approved, the agency is responsible for offering a training program for foster parents. Topics of the agency training program are based upon an assessment that is made of foster parent training needs. The foster parent training program has the following goals:

1. To enable foster parents to have some basic knowledge about foster care, including the agency policy, the role of the worker, and the needs of children in care;
2. To increase the foster parents' understanding of the meaning that separation and loss has for children in foster care;
3. To educate foster parents with regard to State regulations and agency policy on discipline of children in foster care;
4. To prepare foster parents for the placement situations and problems that are apt to occur;
5. To assist foster parents in acquiring an awareness of their own latent strengths and innate abilities;

6. To help foster parents to understand the foster parent role and to feel comfortable in that role;
7. To prepare foster parents for working with others as part of a foster care team;
8. To promote high morale among foster parents.

The training program is based upon principles of adult education which emphasize (a) methods of instruction that respect the adult's self-perception of a responsible, self-directing, and independent individual, and (b) courses that have immediate relevance to adult interests and responsibilities.

Suggestions and recommendations by foster parents for improving the training program are always welcome.

Supervision of Children Placed in Foster Homes

After a child is selected for a particular family and placed in their home, the agency is required to supervise the placement. To ensure a secure and stable placement, the agency is required to provide -

Basic information about each child who will be placed in the foster home. (If a child is placed on an emergency basis, the agency has up to 30 days to supply this information.) The information can consist of whatever data the agency believes is necessary, as long as the following items are included:

An estimate of how long the child may need to be in foster care, and the basis for the estimate;

Specific information about any medical problems the child may have, the medical plan for the child and an explanation of the agency's procedure that should be followed if emergency medical treatment becomes necessary;

Any handicaps or behavior problems;

School and educational experiences;

The relationship of the child and the child's own parents;

Requirements and plans for visitation between the child and the family, as well as the likely locations of these visits;

Placement and discharge goals.

Basic information about agency policies and procedures. This information includes the following:

A foster parent manual (as this one) that summarizes all current agency policies and procedures related to the foster parent's role and responsibility.

A copy of the agency's policy and procedure that outlines the decision-making process for removal of a child from the foster family (this

information should be given at the time of initial certification or approval and at the time of recertification or reapproval);

An explanation of how a foster parent can request an administrative review of any agency decision;

An explanation of foster parent's legal rights;

A register for maintaining information about each child placed in a foster home.

After a child is placed in a foster home, the agency is required to arrange not less than two face to face contacts with the foster parent to discuss the child's progress during the first 30 days of placement. Thereafter, the agency is required to arrange face to face contacts with a foster parent at least quarterly (every 90 days) in the home. Conferences are also arranged in the event of either a sudden change in the child's circumstances, condition, behavior, etc. or an emergency situation that may alter the foster family's capacity to continue to care for the child.

Every effort will be made to schedule these conferences at a time that is mutually convenient for the foster family and agency staff.

The purpose of regular conferences is to discuss and share information about the child's adjustment, relationships and functioning in the home, school and community. It is important for foster parents to raise questions and concerns during these conferences. In addition, whenever an emergency occurs involving the foster child and/or the foster family, agency staff will meet with the foster parents as needed. Remember, the agency is mandated to provide services that respond to identified problems and protect the best interests of the child!

Supervision by an agency of a foster home placement continues until the foster child is returned to his/her family, reaches the age of 21, is adopted, placed under legal guardianship, married, transferred to the care of another agency or discharged from agency care or to independent living. Sometimes post discharge services are provided when children return to their natural families.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FOSTER PARENTING

All foster parents, natural parents, and agency caseworkers have distinct roles in foster family care programs. Role expectations include the following rights and responsibilities.

Foster parent responsibilities include —

Providing temporary care for child(ren), helping each to feel accepted and secure;

Providing guidance, discipline, a good example and as many positive life experiences as possible;

Encouraging and supervising school attendance, participating in teacher conferences, and keeping the child's caseworker informed about any special educational needs;

Working with the agency in arranging for a child's regular and/or special medical and dental care;

Assisting a child in achieving his/her permanency goal;

Understanding the goals and purposes of parent-child visits;

Helping a child to adjust emotionally to the stress of separation and placement;

Informing the child's caseworker promptly about any problems that arise or service that is needed.

Foster parent rights include —

Accepting or rejecting a child for placement in the foster home;

Participating with the agency in pre-placement planning, whenever possible;

Limiting the number of children that can be placed in the foster home;

Expecting regular visits from child's caseworker for the purpose of mutual exchange of information and joint planning efforts;

Receiving agency-wide support in behalf of the effort that is made to care for a child;

Requesting a clinical evaluation, when indicated, for any child to be placed or already placed in the foster home;

Agency recognition of the foster parent's personal privacy;

Being included in all agency planning that concerns the future of each foster child living in the foster home;

Receiving pertinent information on each child who is to be placed in the foster home;

Having the opportunity to learn about all agency policies and procedures that have relevance for foster parents;

Having the opportunity to participate in training programs for foster parents;

Receiving agency help promptly, if requested, for any special needs or crises that arise;

Having the opportunity to file and discuss any complaints and disagreements with the agency without fear of reprisal;

Having the agency give preference over all other applicants to a foster parent's application to adopt a child who has been continuously in care with them for at least 12 months;

Intervening as an interested party in any court proceeding involving the custody of a child who has been in the foster home for 12 continuous months or longer;

Notification and the right to participate in any Family Court review hearing on a child placed voluntarily who has been in the foster home continuously for a period of 12 months or longer.

Natural parent responsibilities include —

Helping prepare their children for the foster care placement;

Working with the caseworker in developing the child's service plan;

Working on the solution to the problems that are preventing their children from returning home;

Visiting their children at a time and place arranged by the caseworker following consultation with the foster parent;

Discussing their children's care and progress with the caseworker;

Informing the caseworker about major changes, such as change of address, telephone number, job, income, marriage or other living arrangements;

Keeping appointments with the caseworker and other service providers;

Contributing toward the cost of their children's care, if they are able to do so.

Natural parent's rights include —

Discussing with the agency the selection of the specific foster care placement and, when feasible, joining in preplacement visits to the foster home;

Participating in agency planning for their child, helping to formulate the specific process and services goals of the service plan, and participating in the review of the plan;

Receiving services, in accordance with the agency service plan, that assist them in overcoming the conditions that led to placement;

Visiting and maintaining contact with their child in accordance with the service plan;

Receiving agency assistance in understanding the degree of authority they have with regard to their child in foster care;

The opportunity to meet the individuals, such as foster parents, child care workers or houseparents, who have the responsibility to care for their child;

Receiving reports from the caseworker on their child's health and development, progress in school and behavior;

Receiving notification as soon as possible of any emergency involving their child;

Being informed by the agency of any Family Court review hearing or proceeding concerning the custody of their child.

Agency caseworker responsibilities include —

To the child:

Coordinating and mobilizing agency, community, and family resources for the purpose of assuring each child a permanent family life;

Assisting the child in adjusting to a new foster home as a result of placement, replacement, transfer, discharge, etc;

Assessing the child's social functioning, reports of behavioral problems and any impressions or observations of psychological change;

Working as the agency representative at assuring the child the opportunity to live in an environment that is conducive to normal growth and development;

Coordinating activity that helps to maintain the child's relationship with the natural family;

Developing and facilitating the implementation of the agency's service plan for the child.

To the foster family:

Providing foster parents with information and services that support their efforts to meet the needs of each child placed in the home;

Providing guidance and information that enable foster parents to be effective and to feel confident in their child caring role.

To the natural family:

Assisting natural parents in understanding and accepting their non-caretaking role;

Helping parents assess problems in the family that affect their ability and willingness to provide for their children;

Helping parents decide on the child's best interests in terms of a permanent home;

Helping parents develop and achieve service plan goals, improve family functioning and the capacity to provide adequate care of children;

Providing parents with positive reinforcement with regard to an appropriate interest in visiting and maintaining contact with a child in placement;

Keeping parents informed about a child's development, progress, and health.

To the agency:

Carrying out responsibilities to the family and assessing the progress that is made on client service goals.

To the court:

Demonstrating that an effort has been made to reunite a family within specific time frames;

Reporting on the efforts or lack of efforts of the parent(s);

Pursuing termination of parental rights when the parents are either unwilling or unable to care for their child(ren).

THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PRIVACY

The State Department of Social Services policies and regulations guarantee the following privacy rights of foster children. These provisions apply unless a condition in a court order states otherwise.

Mail. A child in care has an unrestricted right to send or receive mail without prior censorship or prior reading. A child may be required to open mail in the presence of a foster parent if there is reasonable cause to suspect the delivery of contraband (e.g. drugs or weapons) or if part of the treatment plan for the child includes opening mail from a predesignated person in the presence of a foster parent.

Telephone. A child in care has the right to receive or refuse any or all calls made to him or her during reasonable hours that are determined by the foster parent. Except at the child's request, neither agency staff nor foster parents are to listen in on a child's phone conversation. A child has a right to call others but the time, duration, and cost of such calls may be restricted by the limits of the agency's or foster home's policies for access and utilization of the telephone.

Access to attorney and clergy. With regard to a child's mail or telephone rights, nothing is to be done that might impede a child's access to his or her attorney or clergy.

Searches. Searches of a child's property may be made only when there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child has in his or her possession (1) an item that belongs to someone else; (2) an item that it is a crime or offense to possess, such as a weapon, firearm, controlled substance and marijuana; (3) an article that a foster parent, in consultation with a representative of an authorized agency, may consider to be dangerous or harmful to the child, other children in the home or agency or the home's physical structure. Foster parents may request from the agency a list of items that fall in this category (e.g. matches, chemicals, pocket knives). In addition, foster parents may conduct searches only when there is reasonable cause to believe that the child or other persons in the home are in imminent danger of serious harm due to the child's intent to use or distribute such an object or substance in his or her possession.

A search may include asking a child to empty such personal effects as a wallet or purse, removing outer garments such as coat, hat, and shoes, and examining pant and sleeve cuffs as well as waistbands. Visual inspection of the mouth, nose, and ears may be permitted provided it is done by a person of the same sex as the child. Strip searches are not permissible.

Every possible effort should be made to obtain the child's physical presence whenever his/her room locker or possessions are to be searched. If this is not possible the foster parent is expected to tell the child as soon as possible that a search was made and whether any material has been confiscated.

LEGAL RIGHTS OF FOSTER PARENTS

The law recognizes the importance of foster parents and their special knowledge of the child and his or her needs. Some of a foster parent's rights are brought into play in decisions made by the agency, some in relation to court decisions. The court that has jurisdiction over matters related to foster care is Family Court.

The purpose of this section is to define the law or proceeding and how it relates to foster parents.

Foster parents are entitled in any proceedings to have legal assistance, although the average foster parent is not eligible for free legal services and would be responsible for the cost of legal assistance. The agency will be represented by a county or agency attorney and the child will be assigned a law guardian to safeguard his or her best interests.

FOSTER PARENTS' RIGHTS IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS

Removal of a Child from a Foster Home (NYS Department of Social Services Regulation 443.5). The Department's policy and regulations on the removal of children from foster family care provide a uniform standard of practice for agencies to follow when responding to placement related problems in foster homes.

If the agency is planning to remove a child from a foster home, the agency is required to do the following:

1. Notify the foster parents of the proposed removal in writing at least ten days prior to the proposed date. The only exception is a case where the health or safety of the child requires immediate removal from the foster home.
2. Allow the foster parents to request a conference with the agency. At this conference the foster parent will be advised of the reasons for the proposed removal and be given the opportunity to discuss the reasons why the child should not be removed.
3. Hold the conference within ten days of the date the agency receives the request from the foster parents.
4. Send written notice of the conference to the foster parents and the foster parent's legal representative, if there is one, at least five days prior to the conference date.
5. Make a decision no later than five days after the conference and send a written notice of the decision to the foster parents and their legal representative. The decision should also advise the foster parents of the right to a fair hearing.

If there is a conference request, the child will not be removed from the foster home until at least three days after the notice of decision is sent, or prior to the proposed date of removal, whichever occurs later. (For example, if the original proposed date of removal was January 10 and the decision was sent January 6, the removal date would remain January 10. However, if the original proposed date is January 10 but the decision is sent on January 11, the removal cannot be effected until January 14.)

Fair Hearing (Section 400 - Social Services Law). If after the conference, the foster parent is still dissatisfied with the agency decision to remove a child, the law permits the foster parent to request a fair hearing. This is an objective administrative review by a hearing officer assigned by the State Department of Social Services to hear the foster parent and the agency's views regarding the removal of the child. Plans for a fair hearing are made after the Department's fair hearing section receives a written or telephone request from the foster parent.

The foster parent is entitled to have legal representatives at the fair hearings. Foster parents may appeal fair hearing decisions to the State Supreme Court pursuant to Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

Notification of Foster Parents Regarding Adoption Proceedings (New York State Department of Social Services Regulation 421.19). An agency shall inform the foster parents when a child in their care is free or to be freed for adoption and of the procedure for applying to adopt the child. It must also inform the foster parent of the provisions of the adoption subsidy program. The agency must give the foster parent the opportunity to submit an adoption application if a child who is free or planned to be freed has been in the home for 12 continuous months. Agencies are required to conduct meetings with foster parents to review the differences between foster care and adoption.

Foster Parent Adoption Preference (Section 383.3 - Social Services Law). Foster parents who have cared for a child for 12 months who becomes free for adoption must

have their application to adopt given preference and first consideration over all other applications. Final determinations regarding adoptions are within the sole discretion of the court.

Foster Parents' Rights to Custody Intervention (Section 383.3 - Social Services Law). "Foster parents having had continuous care of foster children for more than 12 months through an authorized agency, shall be permitted as a matter of right, as an interested party to intervene in any proceedings involving the custody of the child." This means that whenever there is court action that will change the custody of a child, foster parents meeting the 12-month requirement may be parties to the action. (All such actions that are initiated by the agency will be explained in the next section.) In addition, parents or relatives may try to obtain custody of a child through a habeas corpus proceeding. If this occurs and foster parents have cared for the child for the required 12 months, they may join in the action as an interested party.

SUMMARY OF ADOPTION RIGHTS

Once parental rights have been permanently terminated, a child becomes freed for adoption. The agency is then required to find a permanent home for that child. With regard to adoption, foster parents have clearly specified rights -

To have their application to adopt a child who has been continuously in their care for at least 12 months given preference over all other applicants;

To intervene as an interested party in any court proceeding involving the custody of a child who has been in their care for 12 continuous months or longer;

To be given notice and a right to participate in any family court review hearing on a child placed involuntarily who has been in their care continuously for a period of 12 months or longer.

THE FAMILY COURT AND FOSTER PARENTS

The Family Court is a subject of interest to foster parents because every child in foster care becomes involved in one or more Family Court proceedings. By understanding the scope of the Court's authority and its objectives, functions and role in the foster care system, foster parents will be better able to help their foster children in understanding their placement situation.

Authority

The Family Court is authorized by the New York State Constitution to deal with certain issues involving children and their families. The Court has jurisdiction over cases involving:

- o the abuse and neglect of children
- o adoption
- o custody and rights to visit children
- o family offenses including abuse of spouses and other family members
- o children who are not charged with crimes but who may need supervision, treatment or placement. (Persons in need of supervision or PINS proceedings.)
- o termination of parental rights
- o paternity

- o support of children, spouses, and ex-spouses
- o approving and reviewing the placement of children who are in foster care at specified intervals
- o children who may have committed an act which if committed by an adult would be considered a crime (juvenile delinquency proceedings)
- o children whose care and custody or custody and guardianship have been transferred by their parents to an authorized agency, a social services district, or the Division for Youth.

Objectives

The Court procedures are designed to protect both:

- (a) The best interests of the children involved; and
- (b) the legal and constitutional rights of the parties involved in any Court proceedings.

Proceedings

Most Family Court proceedings are divided into two hearings: fact-finding and dispositional.

Functions

- o **PROTECTION:** A Family Court may place a child in foster care when there is a finding of neglect or abuse that clearly indicates that court ordered removal from the home is in the best interests of children. An agency may remove children from their homes in emergency situations and place them in foster care before a finding of abuse or neglect has been made where there is imminent danger to a child. Only Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) or Juvenile Delinquents (JDs) may be placed in detention.
- o **CASE EVALUATION:** The judge decides whether the Family Court has jurisdiction over a matter involving a child and his/her family.
- o **CASE DISPOSITION:** Drawing upon the data and recommendations of specialists (probation officers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, educators, foster parents, detention personnel, etc.) as well as his own observations and evaluation, a Family Court judge decides what actions should be taken.
- o **REFERRAL:** A Family Court judge evaluates the plan, encourages optimum use by child and parent of services that may be available; in general, the Family Court endeavors to ensure agency understanding of the child's need and the family's problem; it may order the authorized agency having custody of the child to make efforts to strengthen the parent-child relationship or to make efforts to free the child for adoption..
- o **REPORTING:** A Family Court judge may be alert to shortages or inadequacies of facilities and may communicate these to responsible bodies and to the community at large. Family Court judges have the authority to visit schools or institutions in which any person within the Court's jurisdiction has been placed. They may also participate in community organizations and meetings. There is no duty to do any of those things.

Role

The Family Court has a dominant role in the administration of the foster care system. The court's powers relating to foster care include:

1. Approving or disapproving petitions for the transfer by parents of the care and custody or guardianship and custody of a child;
2. Approving or disapproving the surrender for adoption of a child by his or her parent or guardian;
3. Appointing a law guardian for a child who is the subject of a petition filed with the Family Court;
4. Determining the appropriate disposition of petitions in abuse and neglect proceedings, proceedings to determine whether a child is a Person in Need of Supervision, proceedings to determine whether a child is a juvenile delinquent, and a proceeding to determine whether parental rights should be terminated;
5. Reviewing the foster care status of a placed child and deciding the future placement of a child after considering —
 - (a) the appropriateness of agency's plan for the child;
 - (b) what services have been offered to strengthen and re-unite the family;
 - (c) where return of the child to the natural parent is not likely, what efforts have been made or should be made to evaluate or plan for other modes of care;
 - (d) in the case of a child freed for adoption, what services have been provided to ensure and expedite the adoption of such child;
 - (e) any further efforts which have been or will be made to promote the best interests of the child.

A GLOSSARY OF COURT AND LEGAL TERMINOLOGY

Abandonment

A child legally is considered to be "abandoned" by his parent if such parent evinces an intent to forgo his or her parental rights and obligations as manifested by his or her failure for six continuous months to visit the child and communicate with the child or agency with which the child is placed although able to do so and not prevented or discouraged from doing so by the placement agency.

Adoption

Adoption is the method provided by law to establish the legal relationship of parent and child between persons who are not so related by birth, thereby granting them the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their natural parents.

Custody

Having custody of a child means that a person or agency is responsible for the care of that child. Children in foster care are placed in the custody of an authorized agency and in the care of duly certified or approved foster parents.

Custody Order

After the Family Court hears all sides of a case, there will be a decision as to who should have custody of the child. The decision is contained in an official court paper called a custody order. This term is used only with regard to familial situations, not residential placements. "Dispositional order" is the appropriate term for proceedings related to residential placements.

Dispositional Hearing

If after the fact finding hearing, the judge decides that the allegations in a petition are true and there is a legal remedy, a dispositional hearing will be held then or on another day to determine the actions that should be ordered by the court.

Emergency Removal

Sometimes in a child abuse or neglect proceeding, a child may be taken away from his or her home before a petition is filed in the Family Court and before the judge hears the case. If a child's life or health seems to be in imminent danger by staying with his or her parent or other persons legally responsible for his or her care and there is not enough time to obtain a court order, the police, peace officers, law enforcement officials, agents of societies for the prevention of cruelty to children or designated employees of local social services districts may take the child from his or her home before going through the court. This is called emergency removal. There are limits to the length of time a child may remain in protective custody without a court hearing.

Fact-Finding Hearing

This is the first portion of a Family Court proceeding during which the judge decides whether the statements in the petition have been proven. If the facts are not proven the case will be dismissed. This means the case is finished. If the facts are

proven, then a dispositional hearing will be held to determine what actions should be ordered by the court. There is no jury in Family Court.

Guardianship

This term is used to describe the circumstances when a court assigns to a person or agency other than the child's parent authority and responsibility for the child.

Guardianship is generally defined in terms of a specific set of powers which are assigned by the court. These powers over the child may include the authority to consent to marriage, to enlistment in the armed services, and to ordinary medical treatment. When a legal guardian is given custody of a child, the guardian may be granted other powers and duties by the court, including the right to and duty to protect, train and discipline the child; the duty to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, and ordinary medical care; the right to determine where and with whom the child shall live; and the right, in an emergency, to authorize surgery or other extraordinary medical care.

NOTE: It is extremely rare for foster parents to have guardianship of foster children who are placed in their homes for temporary care.

Juvenile Delinquency

A juvenile delinquent is a person over 7 and under 16 years of age who commits an act that would be a crime if it were done by an adult. A 13, 14 or 15-year-old who commits certain serious, violent acts may be treated as an adult in a criminal court in which case a proceeding may be held to determine whether the child is a "juvenile offender" or the criminal court may remove the case back to Family Court for a proceeding to determine whether the child is a juvenile delinquent.

Order of Visitation

A judge may sign an order of visitation, which is an official court paper saying that the person who has custody of a child must allow another person to visit the child at certain times and under certain circumstances.

NOTE: Also, see definition of Visitation Rights

Order of Protection

Frequently in Family Court proceedings an order of protection is issued. The order is an official court paper signed by a judge requiring a specific person to act or to refrain from acting in a certain manner. The purpose of the order is to attempt to protect a family or household member from being harmed or threatened by another person.

Permanent Neglect

A Family Court may declare a child permanently neglected where the child has been in the care of an authorized agency and the child's parents or custodian(s) have failed for a period of more than one year following the date such child came into the care of an agency to substantially and continuously or repeatedly to maintain contact with, or plan for the future of, the child although physically and financially able to do so.

Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)

A person in need of supervision (PINS) is a person under the age of 16 who:

- a. does not attend school;
- b. is incorrigible, ungovernable, or habitually disobedient and beyond the lawful control of his parents, guardians or other lawful authorities; and/or unlawfully possesses marijuana.

A PINS petition may be filed by a peace or police officer, the child's parents or other person legally responsible for the child's care, a social services official or child caring agency or any person who was injured by or witnessed the child's inappropriate activities. The results of dispositional hearings which find children to be "persons in need of supervision" may be an order for the children to be supervised by probation officers or to receive treatment or possibly to be placed in a residential program.

Visitation Rights

Having custody of a child means that a person is legally responsible for the care of that child. Visitation rights are sometimes given by the court to people who no longer have custody of their child, but have the court's permission to see the child at certain times.

WHEN TO CALL THE CASEWORKER

The caseworker is the person foster parents should contact about any problem or concern related to the care of a foster child. Every caseworker is responsible for keeping the agency informed about what is happening to children on their caseload and for obtaining all information that is needed for assessing problem situations involving foster children. The specific responsibility makes it essential for each child's caseworker to work closely and cooperatively with the child's foster parents.

The following are examples of situations when it is appropriate for foster parents to call the caseworker:

1. To obtain suggestions on how to handle a problem or a crisis situation;
2. To consult on tentative plans affecting the child;
3. To express concern about a change in the child's behavior or some area of his/her social functioning (family, school, peer relationships, attitudes, habits, conduct, symptoms, etc.)
4. To make the agency aware of sudden changes in the foster family's circumstances that may affect the child's placement or agency planning for a child;
5. To complain about agency decisions or express an opinion about the implications of agency planning for a foster child. Any disagreements with the child's caseworker about plans and decisions should be resolved through an open discussion. This is usually achieved when a meeting can be scheduled at a mutually convenient time and held in a place that assures privacy and freedom from distractions or interruptions. In preparing for the meeting a foster parent may want to draw up a list of concerns and questions;
6. To obtain information about community services or resources that might be useful to the child;
7. To keep the agency informed about a parent-child visit that was not observed by an agency representative.

When an issue is not resolved through discussions with the caseworker, the foster parent may request a meeting with the agency's foster care supervisor or director of social services.

HOW PLACEMENT AFFECTS THE CHILD

What happens when children have to leave their homes

FEELINGS OF LOSS

Children feel severe personal loss when separated from their families. They have lost the most important people in their lives — their parents, brothers and sisters. They have lost their familiar pattern of living. They have lost their homes and the places that make up their own worlds.

REACTIONS TO LOSS

Children's reactions to separation vary. Their emotional development is interrupted. They often feel abandoned and helpless, worthless, even responsible for the family's breakdown. They may seek to punish themselves. In general, the adjustment period for foster children typically follows a pattern that includes:

Moving toward the foster family (a honeymoon period, during which the child is cooperative and well behaved, but filled with anxieties, feeling indifferent and numb);

Moving away from the foster family (a withdrawing period, during which the child is hesitant, feels depressed and distrustful, and seeks solitude);

Moving against the foster family (during which the child is frequently rebellious and demanding, expressing forceful anger and hostility).

ADJUSTING

Children work through their adjustment in different ways over different periods of time. A healthy adjustment has begun when a child generally seems happier, more content and self confident and has begun to resolve feelings of anger and anxiety.

DON'T FORGET . . .

these questions should be answered by the agency caseworker before a foster parent accepts a child for placement in the home.

1. Why is this child being placed? What is the child's legal status?
2. What is the family situation? Where are the parents? If out of the home, how long? Are there brothers and/or sisters? Where are they?
3. Will the parents visit? How often?
4. Is the child in good health? Date of last physical? Any medical problems?
5. What grade is the child in at school? Any school problems?
6. What is the board rate? Medical coverage? Clothing allowance?
7. Does the child have any special behavior problems or unusual habits?

PREPARING FOR THE CHILD'S REACTION TO PLACEMENT

1. Work with the child's caseworker in arranging preplacement visits that are done in graduated contacts. (Keep in mind that in most cases, a child can only cope with one stress at a time.)
2. Make certain that the child's caseworker tells the child as clearly and directly as possible the reason he or she is coming into the care of the agency and being placed in a foster family home.
3. Recognize that the child will have fears about the foster family that can be allayed by an adequate number of visits that are satisfying and rewarding. Fears are more intense in emergency placements.
4. Be aware of the child's special need to be helped with feelings about separation. Actively encourage the child to express his or her feelings about being separated from the biological parents.
5. Recognize that a child's tempestuous expression of anger in the early stages of placement is necessary and helpful in resolving loss.
6. Encourage and promote visits with the child's own parents according to the agency plan.
7. Offer food to the child during visits and at the time of placement. Show the child his or her designated living space immediately.
8. Allow the child to select the names to call the foster parents. If the child cannot decide on a name, offer suggestions. For many children, it may take a period of time before they are comfortable enough to call the foster parent by a name. It is important not to rush them. When they are ready, they will select a name.
9. Encourage the child to bring some favorite object to the foster home.
10. Recognize the importance of the child's relationship with the agency caseworker during the transition from his or her own home or a previous placement. If possible discuss the caseworker's role in the placement process before a child is placed. The nature and duration of the transitional phase will depend to some extent on a child's maturity as well as the child's preparation for placement.
11. Let the child know what will be expected of them within the first few days of placement. This will involve clarifying the role of each family member, household rules, schedules, etc.

WELCOMING A NEW CHILD INTO YOUR HOME*

THE DOORBELL RINGS and panic strikes. Try to relax and be yourself, with a bit of reservation. Remember the child is as nervous as you. Don't overpower him with a rushing of words, hugs and kisses. Give him a chance to look you over, take in the new house, get the "feeling" of his new home. Listen to the Social Worker who may have helpful hints to the child's history, schedule, food preferences, all to help you help that child. Some pleasant words to the child let all relax.

THE SOCIAL WORKER HAS LEFT. HELP! If the child is old enough, an immediate tour of the home is a good icebreaker. Start with his bedroom, his bed, letting him know what will be his. And of course don't forget to show him the bathroom! Before the day is over, he should know his outdoor limits and basic rules of the house ... but do remember there will be too many rules for any child to immediately absorb. That all comes under the heading known as the Adjustment Period.

In some cases a new child is pretty ragged and dirty. You may cringe and want to yell "A bath before all these niceties!" Try to remain calm and remember an immediate attack and symbolic stripping of clothes, if done harshly, is debasing the child. You are telling him without words "You are totally unacceptable." Take the tour. Have a snack. Then calmly state that you know he'd feel better after a bath. Refrain from muttering "These clothes get burned. P.U." Those clothes are an extension of him. No comments, please.

THE CHILD IS TERRIFIED. Some children are extremely fearful. If he is cringing near the front door and refuses to take off his coat, don't worry. It's calming to make statements such as "I know you are scared. When you feel like taking off your coat, I'll be ready to show you your bedroom and give you a snack. I'll be in the kitchen if you need me." Let him calm down. He'll be ready in less time than you expected.

MEALTIME. The first meal is another uncomfortable or exciting adventure. (Depending on you and the child.) If you are lucky, the social worker was able to tell you some of the child's favorite foods and eating habits. If he doesn't choose lobster as his favorite food, it helps to be able to serve what he likes. If you do not know, he's too young to tell you, or doesn't want to tell, serve something simple or universally enjoyed by most children. Hamburgers, or hot dogs fare better than that interesting seven-layered casserole you always meant to try out on the family.

Whether it is nervousness or a deprived background, a child may react at the first meal in a new home as though he must eat for the coming month. Don't make a comment. This usually tapers off as he begins to feel as though he "belongs" in the family. Some children may pick and not want to eat at all. Give each child time to level out with his appetite.

HIS TABLE MANNERS. HELP! Forget it for at least a few days. That can be changed later.

HOW LONG DOES AN ADJUSTMENT PERIOD LAST?

Every child and every family differs from all others. Some children are settled into a new family in a few weeks; some it takes months. But a new child usually is too good for words (he's trying desperately to please you.) or is acting up (he's just plain trying! It can be an indirect way of seeing if you will keep him even if ...)

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BUT I HAVE A BABY WHOSE SCHEDULE I'M FINDING DIFFICULT. Each mother will find one schedule convenient which is difficult for another mother. Time again is the word to remember. Is the infant well? If so, take your time and gradually alter his schedule to fit comfortably into your family's routine.

AND NOW TO BED. The first day is coming to an end. The child is still nervous and may have never had a regular bedtime before. Some children experience fear now, who showed none all day. A calm statement may help. Tell the child where you will be in the night. A door kept ajar, a nightlight, and calm statements may help. Several wakeful nights may be spent until the child is comfortable in his new bed. This too should pass with time. It might help to keep a plastic cover on the mattress until you know whether or not the child is a bedwetter.

I THINK EVERYTHING IS CONFUSING. So does the child! Remember the reoccurring word is calm. If you stay calm the child will soon feel the same way ... and before you know it you have merged into a family unit. If you find difficult problems along the way, do remember the child's social worker is only a telephone call away. He has an interest in helping you help the child.

HOW TO BUILD A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FOSTER CHILD'S PARENTS

Below are examples of what some foster parents have done to help create and maintain a working relationship with their foster child's parents:

1. Praising and recognizing decisions and activities related to positive parenting;
2. Constructing scrapbooks or photo albums containing mementos for the child;
3. Constructing a family tree or a "Life Book". A "Life Book" is an individually made book covering the child's life from birth to present, written in the child's own words. It may include a narrative describing what has happened to the child, when and why, as well as what the child's feelings are about what happened. The book may incorporate photos, drawings, report cards, awards and certificates, letters from previous foster or adoptive parents, natural parents, a birth certificate and anything else the child may want to include;
4. Sending parents a birthday or Christmas card.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN FOSTER PARENTS AND NATURAL PARENTS

1. School conferences, school functions and PTA meetings;
2. The child's clothing and shopping plans;
3. The child's health, behavior or school problems;
4. Child's visits to the doctor and dentist;
5. Plans for holidays that are special to the child e.g. birthday parties, graduations, Christmas celebrations or Thanksgiving dinner;
6. The child's social activities, relationships, social development and special needs.

NOTE: In the effort by foster parents to help natural parents to feel accepted and to have an important although non-caretaking role in the lives of their children, foster parents should avoid making promises that confidential information given them by natural parents can be withheld from an agency; information that is confidential is likely to affect agency planning and decision making responsibilities.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENT-CHILD VISITING

Parental visiting of children in foster care supports reuniting children with their parents. Parental visits which are regular and constructive help to alleviate a child's separation anxiety and to keep the natural parent involved with the child as well as with the agency providing temporary care. Each foster parent plays a critical role in helping to make visits in the foster home an experience that satisfies the child and strengthens the child-parent relationship.

It is important to keep in mind that for many parents visiting their children in foster care is an experience that may heighten their sense of personal failure and inadequacy. Their anxiety causes some parents to make unrealistic promises or to agree to plans for which there is little chance of success.

Unless a child is to be adopted, agency goals are to strengthen family ties during separation and to reunite families whenever possible. The agency is required to plan and facilitate bi-weekly visiting between parent and child unless bi-weekly visiting is prohibited by court order by the terms of the voluntary placement agreement OR when the placement makes bi-weekly visiting impossible. In this case, the agency must facilitate monthly visiting.

Making Visits Successful

Foster parents can do a great deal to help make visits in the foster home go well. Some suggestions are --

Try to make the child's parent feel welcome by acting as natural as possible, rather than overly intimate. It may be helpful to offer a cup of coffee or a snack.

Try to give the parent and child some privacy during the visit by either going about normal routine or making a separate space available.

Have some toys and games available (especially for younger children) that the child enjoys, so parents can use them in playing with the child.

When There Are Problems With Visits

At times, a specific problem may arise. Contact the caseworker as soon as possible. This may include any incidents, your observations or feelings about something that occurred or the child's reactions. Because every situation is different, the caseworker is in the best position to advise you on how to handle different issues.

Some common problems, which occur during parent-child visits in the foster home, include --

Failure of a parent to show up for a visit -- Inform the caseworker immediately. It is his or her responsibility, not the foster parents', to deal with the parent.

Parent continually comes late for visits — Ask the child's caseworker to discuss this with the parent. In addition, the parent can be asked to call if he or she is going to be late.

Parent arrives unannounced — Foster parents have to use their own judgment as to whether or not to allow the visit. The foster parent's own schedule as well as the frequency of this occurrence might determine the foster parents' flexibility. The child's caseworker should be called if the situation becomes a problem or if the foster parents are uncertain about what should be done.

Parent arrives in a state of tension, visibly angry or intoxicated — The foster parent will have to decide whether or not to allow the visit. The foster parent should assess the threat of danger, potential injury to the child, the ability to control the situation. If possible, contact the child's caseworker.

Parent upsets the child by saying destructive things or tries to physically reprimand him or her — Intervene in the situation. Try to stay calm but firm. If the situation does not improve, suggest that the visit end. Contact the child's caseworker.

Parents call constantly — Limit calls to a specific time that is both convenient for the foster parents and fair to the parents and the child.

The child constantly returns from outside visits overtired, upset, sick to his or her stomach, etc. — Contact the caseworker.

AGENCY'S POLICY ON VISITING

(Each agency's policy and procedure for visiting should be clearly outlined here to avoid misunderstandings. Clearly spell out the agency policies, the role of the caseworker, and the role of the foster parents.)

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FOSTER PARENTS

The following is a list of important principles for guiding foster parents. Periodic review of the principles is recommended whenever a foster parent is involved in making decisions related to foster parent responsibilities, in trying to understand the needs of foster children, in solving foster home problems, etc. More principles can be added to the list as they are learned from a foster parent's own experience and from participation in foster parent training programs.

Placement Principles

1. When there is serious doubt about whether a proposed placement of a child will work out, the foster parent should not agree to the agency plan to place a particular child in the home. The reason for the feeling of doubt does not have to be clear or specific; it could be an intuitive reaction that is beyond rational analysis.
2. Foster care placements that break down are traumatic for all concerned, especially foster children. Replacements, i.e. the movement of a child from one foster home to another, are painful and damaging to the foster child and disturbing to foster parents.
3. Preplacement visits are important in preparing children for leaving their own families and adjusting to the foster home. It is beneficial to the foster child and the foster parent to have more than one preplacement visit.
4. The anxiety children have during a preplacement visit may be kept to a minimum by helping the child to get to know the foster family without the presence and distraction of neighbors or family friends.
5. Offering food to the just-placed foster child is important. It will gratify the child's craving for oral satisfaction and help the child to perceive the foster parent as friendly and interested in pleasing him/her.
6. Children denied the opportunity for preplacement visits may need to have more frequent contact with their agency caseworker until they begin to feel secure about their foster home placement.
7. Children coming into care are in a state of great dependency. The attachment to the agency caseworker is a natural, temporary reaction to the dependency that the child is experiencing.
8. Just-placed children have a strong interest in knowing where their room is and where they will sleep.

Communication Principles

1. Children become anxious and confused when they do not understand the reasons they are in foster care. By answering their questions about what made it necessary for them to be placed in foster care, anxiety and confusion will subside.

2. Communication is always at risk of breaking down with children who are anxious as it is their tendency to react immediately to what is said; therefore, the foster parents should carefully think through the content of any communication with an anxious child.
3. Giving a foster child the opportunity to talk about something that is being felt rather than simply experiencing a feeling is the first step in maintaining self-control. Putting things into words is the means by which everyone can detach themselves both from the world about them and from their inner world of their own emotions and thoughts.
4. Foster children will feel less tension about their situation when allowed to talk freely and openly about their natural family and have no fear of being punished for saying things that may be regarded as critical of adults.
5. Avoid asking a foster child questions about what was discussed with the caseworker, counselor or other professional, e.g. doctor. Everyone needs confidential relationships and to know that his/her right to privacy is respected.
6. Foster parents know more about living with children on a day to day basis than agency caseworkers or anyone else. Since decisions affecting children also affect their foster families an agency should be expected to involve all foster parents in any major decisions related to their foster children.
7. Discussions with foster children that focus on their parents and family relationships can be helpful to the children as long as foster parents avoid saying anything that could be misconstrued as criticism of parents or a child's family.
8. Encourage the foster child to talk with the agency caseworker about problems or concerns that are difficult to understand or resolve.
9. An act of lying by a child should be viewed as a childish effort at solving a problem. At age 8 children recognize there are consequences to lying although that recognition may go no further than the thought that if caught "I will be punished". By age 8 lying has become a more conscious choice. Children over age 8 who handle all stressful situations with lies are in need of professional help.
10. Foster parents can help their foster children to overcome communication problems and to learn communication skills by setting an example on how to listen to others, how to empathize, how to disagree without arguing, and how to avoid using words that trigger emotional reactions rather than promoting reflection, the meaning of objectivity, the sharing of ideas, creative use of the imagination and critical thinking.

Child Development Principles: Separation

1. Always allow a child to grieve or mourn for his/her parents. A child at the time of being placed in foster care experiences a great sense of loss regardless of the parents' past behavior or the circumstances that led to the child's foster care placement.
2. Be prepared to work closely with the agency caseworker when a child is separated from his/her parents without adequate preparation. Every effort should be made by the agency with the help of foster parents to arrange for the child and his/her

parents to see each other so that feelings that were stirred up by the placement but not faced can at least be out in the open.

3. Allow the foster child to be upset after he/she visits with his/her parents. Such visits often are upsetting. Saying goodbye is difficult. The child will be helped by knowing when the next visit is scheduled.
4. Don't conclude that it is a mistake for the foster child to visit his/her family. Even if occasionally upsetting, in general there are more advantages than disadvantages to such visits for most children. Visits help children to maintain a sense of reality about his/her family.
5. If something unusual happens during a parent-child visit, report it to the caseworker. Always report any physical abuse.
6. Recognize that it is common for children to regard foster care placement as a punishment for some real or imagined bad deed such as causing the breakup of their families. At appropriate times encourage a child to express such thoughts and the disturbing feelings that he/she associates with being separated from the family.

Child Development Principles - Discipline

1. Making threats to discipline or punish a foster child by expulsion from the foster home or by telling the agency caseworker will increase the child's anxiety and will intensify the problem or conflict.
2. In view of the fact that every family has its own rules and ways of doing things, it may take a while for a foster child to learn what is expected in the home. When child does something wrong for the first time, tell him/her exactly what he/she did wrong and explain why the right way is important in the foster family. This will be more effective than punishment. Try to prevent discipline problems by helping the child to understand the family's rules and the expectations it has of its members. Praise and reward all good behavior; compliment the child whenever he/she does well, including ordinary and expected tasks.
3. Understand the difference between discipline and punishment

While the immediate objective of disciplinary action is to stop or to prevent unacceptable behavior, the goal is to increase the child's self-respect, making it strong and resilient so that it will at all times deter the child from wrong doing. Sound discipline supports the child's basic wish for self-regulation; at times it may require firmness, and strictness, judicious use of non-threatening reprimands and penalties as well as encouragement, guidance and instruction. Sound discipline always recognizes the child's need for self-respect and positive relationships with caretaking adults who can be trusted to avoid doing anything that may make a child feel inferior, petty, humiliated, mean, fearful, confused, and unloved.

Punishment is a method of social control that causes a child to experience physical pain or emotional distress. Punishment too often reflects an adult's emotional reaction to a child's misbehavior rather than logical consequences that a child can understand and accept. Punishments have the tendency to impoverish relationships and to frustrate and intimidate rather than to contribute to the socialization of children. Whatever success there is with punishment in controlling a child is usually short lived. What children learn from punishment is that might makes

right. Fear of punishment may restrain children from doing wrong but does not make children want to do right.

4. Children feel encouraged when "special time is spent with them". This means doing something that the child and foster parents can enjoy together. For some foster children the special time may have even greater meaning than it does for the foster parents' own children. Although the need may not be clearly expressed the foster child has an intense need for attention and reassurance with regard to his/her acceptance by the foster parents and members of the family.
6. Holding family meetings to solve problems with cooperation and mutual respect is a key to creating a loving family atmosphere while helping children to develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.

Child-oriented Family Life Principles

1. To the degree that children feel important to those who are significant in their lives, they do feel secure; and in the same measure, the pressures of jealousy are reduced. "A family is happy living together if, when things go badly for one of its members, he is supported by all the others, who make his misfortune their common concern."⁽¹⁾
2. "The happiest family is the one in which each member, given his age and level of maturity, acts with consideration and respect for the unique and individual nature of every other member"
3. "Children suffer acutely if they are deprived of the few special days which are their own, and they lose a great deal of their enjoyment of life if these days are diminished in importance. For most children in our culture, aside from graduations and religious ceremonies such as confirmations, only birthdays and Christmas remain as genuine children's days of the year."
4. Remember the importance that birthdays have for children and the meaning and pleasure that all children derive from holidays that are celebrated with enthusiasm and enjoyment by family members. "If such occasions are celebrated in the right spirit, the glow from these days can spread out over the rest of his life. The regular repetition of these events is the child's guarantee of his continuing importance; holidays punctuate the child's year and with it his life; they are highlights of the year for him..."
5. "Family holidays are one of the most reassuring experiences the child can have in regard to his most fervent anxieties. They are among the most constructive experiences we can provide for him to buttress his security."

(1) The quotations in paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4) and (5) are excerpts from A Good Enough Parent by Bruno Bettelheim, Alfred A. Knopf, NY 1987 pages 289, 333-359. Paragraph 6 is based upon statements from the same book.

6. Children are deeply affected by parent insecurities; to make matters worse, they have their own insecurities which originate in their limited understanding of the world, doubts about their ability to cope with the problems of life, and most of all doubts about their loveability. These insecurities can be managed only to the degree that they are propped up by parental conviction about their ability to manage life successfully, if not right now then when they are grown up.

Use space below for additional guiding principles that are learned in training.

CHECKLISTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

The checklists are to help foster parents to communicate with the child's caseworker about relevant issues. Before a scheduled meeting with a caseworker go through both list and check (/) those topics that are important for the caseworker's understanding of the child and/or what topics need to be discussed.

Checklist #1

Observations of Social Adjustment and Behavioral Problems

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>_____ Accident proneness</p> <p>_____ Aggression</p> <p>_____ Alcohol - drinking</p> <p>_____ Anger</p> <p>_____ Apathy</p> <p>_____ Arguments about rules</p> <p>_____ Bad dreams</p> <p>_____ Bedtime conflicts/problems</p> <p>_____ Bedwetting</p> <p>_____ Boy/girl crazy</p> <p>_____ Carelessness</p> <p>_____ Cleanliness</p> <p>_____ Clinging behavior</p> <p>_____ Clowning behavior</p> <p>_____ Conflicts - family/peers</p> <p>_____ Communication problems</p> <p>_____ Cruelty</p> <p>_____ Crying spells</p> <p>_____ Demanding</p> <p>_____ Depression</p> <p>_____ Destroys toys</p> <p>_____ Disobedience/defiance</p> <p>_____ Distrustful</p> <p>_____ Drugs</p> <p>_____ Eating problems</p> <p>_____ Fatigue</p> <p>_____ Fearfulness</p> <p>_____ Fear of dark, dogs, etc.</p> <p>_____ Feels rejected</p> <p>_____ Fighting</p> <p>_____ Forgetfulness</p> <p>_____ Frequent illness</p> <p>_____ Friends are bad influence</p> <p>_____ Grieving</p> <p>_____ Hearing problems</p> <p>_____ Hitchhiking</p> <p>_____ Hostile attitudes/behavior</p> <p>_____ Hyperactivity</p> <p>_____ Impulsiveness</p> <p>_____ Insomnia</p> <p>_____ Insulting</p> <p>_____ Irritability</p> <p>_____ Isolation from others</p> <p>_____ Jealousy</p> <p>_____ Listening problems</p> <p>_____ Loss of interest</p> <p>_____ Lying</p> | <p>_____ Masturbation</p> <p>_____ Nail biting</p> <p>_____ Nightmares</p> <p>_____ Offensive language - profanity</p> <p>_____ Poor judgement</p> <p>_____ Poor school attendance</p> <p>_____ Poor school performance</p> <p>_____ Problems with other children in the home</p> <p>_____ Problems with neighbors</p> <p>_____ Problems with police</p> <p>_____ Problems with school</p> <p>_____ Passivity</p> <p>_____ Recklessness</p> <p>_____ Refuses to attend school</p> <p>_____ Religious conflict</p> <p>_____ Rivalry</p> <p>_____ Rocking</p> <p>_____ Runs away</p> <p>_____ Sadness</p> <p>_____ Self-blame</p> <p>_____ Self-centeredness</p> <p>_____ Self-criticism</p> <p>_____ Self-destructiveness</p> <p>_____ Self-hate</p> <p>_____ Self-mutilation</p> <p>_____ Self-rejection</p> <p>_____ Sexual preoccupation</p> <p>_____ Smoking</p> <p>_____ Soiling</p> <p>_____ Speech impediment</p> <p>_____ Stays out late</p> <p>_____ Stealing</p> <p>_____ Stubbornness</p> <p>_____ Talks of suicide</p> <p>_____ Teasing</p> <p>_____ Temper tantrums</p> <p>_____ Thumbsucking</p> <p>_____ Unreliable</p> <p>_____ Upset by visits with family</p> <p>_____ Violence</p> <p>_____ Withdrawn behavior</p> <p>_____ Wrecks furniture/property</p> <p>Other (describe)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
|--|--|

Checklist #2

Observations of Personality/Social Development or Positive Changes

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ Appetite | _____ Manners |
| _____ Attention span | _____ Memory |
| _____ Activity - acrobatics | _____ Motor skills |
| _____ Activity - athletics | _____ New relationships |
| _____ Activity - artistic | _____ Obedience |
| _____ Activity - baking | _____ Patience |
| _____ Activity - body building | _____ Perverserance |
| _____ Activity - carpentry | _____ Physical exercise |
| _____ Activity - cooking | _____ Problem solving ability |
| _____ Activity - dancing | _____ Reliability/Trustworthiness |
| _____ Activity - dramatics | _____ Responsibility |
| _____ Activity - games | _____ Self-assertion |
| _____ Activity - music | _____ Self-care |
| _____ Activity - nature | _____ Self-confidence |
| _____ Activity - photography | _____ Self-control |
| _____ Activity - play | _____ Self-expression |
| _____ Activity - reading | _____ Self-regulation |
| _____ Activity - science | _____ Self-reliance |
| _____ Activity - scouting | _____ Self-respect |
| _____ Activity - sewing | _____ Self-worth |
| _____ Activity - singing | _____ Sharing |
| _____ Attendance - school | _____ Social attitudes |
| _____ Conscience | _____ Social conduct |
| _____ Cooperation | _____ Social judgement |
| _____ Curiosity | _____ Social values |
| _____ Energy level | _____ Sportsmanship |
| _____ Frustration tolerance | _____ Stronger relationships |
| _____ Generosity | _____ Talents |
| _____ Goals | _____ Trustful |
| _____ Grooming | _____ Verbal skills |
| _____ Habits - dressing | _____ Vocabulary |
| _____ Habits - eating | _____ Other (describe) |
| _____ Habits - sleeping | _____ |
| _____ Habits - toilet | _____ |
| _____ Ideals - heroes | _____ |
| _____ Imagination | _____ |
| _____ Improved school performance | _____ |
| _____ Independence | _____ |
| _____ Industry | _____ |
| _____ Initiative | _____ |
| _____ Interests | _____ |
| _____ Leadership | _____ |

Checklist #3

Concerns/Problems Related to the Foster Parent Role

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not making progress with foster child | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster care is having adverse affect on my marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough money to cover expenses | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster care is having adverse affect on my other children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't understand agency policy or regulations on ... (explain) | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure how to handle visits by natural parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not getting enough help from my social worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough time away from stress and responsibilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure how to handle medical and dental care of foster child | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbors and/or relatives are creating problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have doubts about wanting to continue as foster parent | <input type="checkbox"/> Things are just not going well |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not being treated fairly by agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Need help in figuring out how to deal with child's problem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know how to deal with school personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster child is very different than expected |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have enough information about child's background |

Other Concerns

List here any other topics for discussion. Write down questions that need to be discussed and answered.

PREPARING A CHILD TO LEAVE YOUR HOME — PREPARING YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY*

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH HAS ARRIVED. The social worker has just told you your foster child is going to leave. It is important to get your feelings in order before approaching the foster child. Whether you feel joy or grief, you need to talk to the child calmly. If you are feeling very emotional ... and many foster parents feel this way ... and you need to gnash your teeth, **DO IT IN PRIVATE.** Separation is difficult enough for a child without burdening him with your emotions also.

WHO TELLS THE CHILD HE IS LEAVING? You and the social worker need to decide who will tell the child. In some cases the worker and child have a close friendship, which will enable the worker to do it best. In others the foster mother or father will be the best candidate. If you are doing it, share how you are dealing with it to the worker. He will want to be supportive and may have helpful hints to help you help the child. Teamwork makes any job a bit easier!

BUT HOW DO I TELL THE CHILD? Honesty and kindness are the best rules of thumb. Every situation is different. There is no cut and dried rule. Try a calm and simple statement such as "Today the judge said ..." and put it in easy to understand language for the child. If it is news he has been anxious to hear, rejoice with the child. If it is news that he will be moved to a new foster home or adoptive family, the child may be afraid of the unknown. He may fear returning to his natural home. Make positive statements. Do not promise happiness forever. Realistically find positive truthful things to say, such as "Your family has waited a long time for you to come back" or "The social worker says you will like this new home because ..."

WHAT IF I DON'T LIKE THE HOME THE CHILD IS MOVING TO? You are not going to help the child by pointing out all the "terrible" things he'll encounter in his move. If he tells you the things he fears about the move, help him to talk about it. Share his fears with the social worker. Don't promise that "Dad won't drink anymore" or "Your new mother will never spank" ... you can't be sure what will happen. You can be positive in saying "Your father is trying very hard not to drink" or "Your mother is very excited about your coming to live with her" if you know this to be true. Don't promise pie in the sky.

WON'T THE CHILD THINK I DON'T LOVE HIM? Many foster parents have this worry, and of course you should tell the child that you have loved and cared for him. Admit you will miss him (if that is the truth). But keep it calm and leave the sobbing scenes out.

HOW SOON BEFORE HE LEAVES SHOULD I TELL THE CHILD HE'S GOING? Some moves must be made within 4 hours or less, if the court so decrees. Other times you have several weeks or months. Time helps you to air fears and worries, if you have time. You must determine how the child might react. Talk it over with your social worker.

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IM WORRIED ABOUT HOW THE FAMILY WILL TAKE THE CHILD'S MOVE. Talk it over with your worker. He may be able to share how other homes have handled this issue. Talking helps everybody concerned, and your family has certainly been involved and concerned ... after all they lived with the foster child too! Do realize the other children in the family may have a grieving period, which will help them accept the fact the foster child is leaving your home.

HOW DO I PACK FOR THE CHILD? Children are accumulators. Whether he's been with you 2 weeks or 2 years, there are items that have become "his". To send a child off with $\frac{1}{2}$ a paper bag of ill-fitting clothes is stripping him of dignity and worth. Take a tour of the house with the child. Tell him you need his help in finding what is his. When he points to the television, or someone else's toy, you can calmly say "No. That belongs to the family." or "That is Sarah's. It stays here." There should be items which have been just his and these items should go with him. A child 3 and older can make the tour. **IT HELPS MAKE THE MOVE DEFINITE FOR THE CHILD AND YOU.**

Do send a picture album if you have made one. If the child's been with you any length of time, you should have compiled snapshots and momentos. Do send bits of his past e.g. cute things he has said or done. A record of his health and shots, a schedule which may help the family. An older child may resent being packed off with a cardboard box or paper bag. If so, ask the worker if something can be arranged for a suitcase. Some Departments and agencies have "loaners" to use for moves.

WHAT ABOUT SENDING A BABY? A very small infant has become used to the SMELLS of your linens. Send a blanket or two, a crib sheet, a comfortable pair of pajamas or outfits he's used to wearing. An older baby has begun to favor certain toys. Send his favorites. It is most important to send the schedule of a baby. List any "firsts" for the mother receiving the child, first tooth, sat up or rolled over, etc. Explain how the baby likes to be held or fed. Anything you know that will help the child adjust quicker to a new home should be shared with the new family.

I CAN HANDLE IT ALL BUT THE MOMENT THE CHILD GOES OUT THE DOOR. You've been a brick so far, don't blow it the last five minutes! Try to send the child off with pleasant memories. When the front door closes feel free to cry or do a jig ... whichever applies to your feelings! Then tell yourself you did the best you knew how. You cared for the child when he needed a parent. He has a brighter future because of you. And now that you've had a child leave ... you're a full-fledged foster parent!

ISSUES PERTAINING TO CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Birthdays and Special Occasions

"It is very exhilarating to feel that one is the special cause of a celebration, as a child may experience on his birthday. Such personally significant moments are truly to be cherished, for they provide us with great happiness at the moment and also with a sustaining hope for the future. The more insecure we feel about our place in the world, the more we need affirmation of our importance ... from those persons who mean most to us." From The Good Enough Parent by Bruno Bettelheim.

Confidentiality

A basic principle and agency requirement for foster parents is never to discuss a child's family background, personal history, problems or special needs with anyone other than persons clearly assigned professional responsibility for some aspect of a foster child's care and supervision. These matters cannot be discussed with the family's friends, neighbors or other relatives who are not part of the foster parent's household.

It is of vital importance to a child's feelings of trust to be aware of the foster parents' commitment to the principle of confidentiality. A breach in confidentiality is not only emotionally devastating and may result in a painful disruption of a child's placement but is a violation of New York State Social Services Law Section 372.4.

Foster parents should have had an opportunity to discuss the implications of the confidentiality principle and its relevance for protecting the privacy of children and their families. It is an important subject that is appropriate for orientation and training and is a matter that has to be kept in mind by foster parents and the agency caseworker throughout a child's placement. Confidential information includes information furnished foster parents by the agency, the caseworker, the child or the child's natural family concerning the family background of the child, the child and family's medical history and condition and/or the services being provided to the child.

During the early stages of a placement a child should be assured of the foster parents' commitment to confidentiality. At the same time foster parents should help the child to understand that the agency expects foster parents to provide the child's caseworker with information that will be useful for planning the child's future.

Mail

All mail that children send or receive is their property. What they write in their letters or what they are told in the letters that come in their mail is a matter of privacy. A foster parent's respect for this principle is not violated, however, by showing concern when a child is disturbed by a letter that is received or by making suggestions about what to write in a letter to be sent to the family or by providing the agency with information about the volume of a child's mail and about any significant reaction by the child to a family's letter.

Personal Property

The personal belongings that a child brings with him are his/hers and may be of particular importance to him/her. Every child should have some place to call his own and this personal/private area, along with his possessions should be respected. When a

child leaves the home, he/she must be allowed to take his personal items and clothing and any gifts or possessions that are acquired.

Gifts of money, savings, or earnings belong to the child. Any substantial sum of money that a child receives from any source should be reported to the agency.

Sleeping Arrangements

Sleeping arrangements for foster children have to comply with the agency's requirements and specific state regulations. Instructions for foster parents with regard to the regulations are provided during the agency's orientation program for prospective foster parents; the regulations are an important area for discussions between agency representatives and prospective foster parents and approved/certified foster parents during reevaluations of their homes.

The New York State Department of Social Services regulations related to sleeping arrangements for foster children are in the Department's booklet, Regulations for Certified Foster Family Boarding Homes and Requirements for Licensed and Certified Foster Family Boarding Homes (Publication #1009A).

The regulations are intended to assure foster children of conditions that are always conducive to normal sleep. Medical research has documented the importance of sleep, its benefits for child development, and the harmful effects to children deprived of restful and normal sleep.

Discipline

The State regulations on the discipline of children in foster care have the following provisions:

- a. Deprivation of meals, snacks, mail, or visits by family as methods of discipline are prohibited.
- b. Room isolation as a method of discipline is prohibited.
- c. Corporal punishment is prohibited.
- d. Solitary confinement is prohibited.
- e. Discipline shall be prescribed, administered, and supervised only by adults. Such responsibilities shall never be delegated to children.

The goal of the regulatory policy is to protect children in agency care from harmful punishment, abuse, maltreatment, and improper supervision. In the State regulations, the term "discipline" is used broadly to refer to both punishment and discipline. Therefore, the five prohibitions listed above are things that are prohibited regardless of whether the activity is meant as "punishment" or "discipline" as those terms were discussed earlier in this Manual.

Remember that the purpose of discipline is not only to maintain order in the household; it should encourage the development of self-control and support the child's wish and drive to be self-regulatory. Discipline also means to give instruction and guidance, meanings that are of paramount importance to foster parents and others responsible for the education and socialization of children.

Foster parent training programs assist foster parents in improving the skills that are needed for their disciplinarian role and in learning what they can do to promote disciplined behavior and preventing disciplinary problems.

Publicity

A parent and child's right to confidentiality also extends to the media. As a result, permission must be obtained from the agency which placed the child with the foster parent before any foster child can be involved in any newspaper articles, photographs for the press, or TV and radio programs which would indicate that the child is in foster care.

Family Name

Children in foster care should always use their legal names. The Social Services Law prohibits the changing of the name of any child while he or she is in the custody of an authorized agency unless it is changed legally by the child's own parents. Children will be confused and misled by attempts to have them use the foster parents' name while in placement. Some children ask to use the foster parents' name out of a need to belong. Foster parents can help the child by recognizing his need but pointing out that his or her placement is temporary.

Religion

The protection of a child's religious faith is emphasized in the Social Services Law and the Family Court Act. To protect the child's religious faith as provided for in the law foster parents should be aware of the following principles:

1. It is the natural parent's right to determine their child's religion and to request that their child be placed in a foster home of the same religious faith as the child. Every effort must be made by the agency to accommodate the natural parent's wishes and an exception can be made only with the natural parent's consent.
2. It is the foster parents' responsibility to make certain that the foster child attends church services and programs. Foster parents caring for children of a different religious faith must respect the religious wishes of natural parents of children in care and endeavor to protect and preserve the religious faith of the children. Foster parents are expected to arrange for the child to attend church services of his or her own faith and all other church affiliated activities.
3. The agency must obtain the natural parents' consent to have a child baptized. Foster parents should not have a child baptized until the caseworker has obtained prior approval from the foster child's natural parents. The religious certificates of the foster child (baptism, first communion, confirmation, etc.) must always be recorded in the child's legal name. The last name of the foster parent must never be used in place of or with the child's legal name. The foster parents should retain the religious certificates in a safe place as they are the child's property and might be needed in the future. The certificates are to be given to the agency caseworker when a foster child leaves the home.

If a foster child is in need of special clothing for first communion, confirmation, or other religious activities the foster parent should contact the child's caseworker. The agency may be able to provide a special clothing allowance for these activities.

Social Security

According to the New York State Department of Social Services, all children in foster care must have a Social Security number. The agency is responsible for obtaining this number. If, however, the foster child applies for and receives a Social Security card, the caseworker should be notified so that the required information may be recorded in the case record.

In some situations, children in foster care receive Social Security benefits that are paid to the agency and applied against the cost of foster care. Upon reaching age 18, foster children are entitled to receive their Social Security benefits directly. It is expected that the child will use these funds for his or her support. If a foster child receives such benefits directly, the foster parent should contact the caseworker immediately.

Other Resources

Some foster children have guardianship accounts, trust funds, etc. that they are entitled to at age 18. The caseworker will inform the foster parent of any available benefits, and arrangements will be made to transfer such funds directly to the child.

Savings

Children in foster care who are earning money may keep as much as they can for future needs. There is no limitation on the amount that they may deposit in a savings account or that may be used to purchase savings bonds, etc. A child may choose to use a portion of his or her earnings for day-to-day expenses.

Having a foster child open a savings account is an effective way for practicing thrift, learning about banks, and managing money. The account should always be in the child's legal name.

Field Trips, Activities

On occasion, a foster child may wish to participate in school, church, or other organizational events, such as field trips. Foster parents usually are not the legal guardians of their foster child; therefore, they are not allowed to sign the consent forms for such activities required by schools, churches, and organizations. When a foster child wishes to participate in such an activity, the foster parent should contact the caseworker; prior approval must be obtained from the natural parents or an agency representative.

Social Activities

Activities are a vital part of a child's life to help him develop skills and to broaden his knowledge and circle of friends. It is not necessary for a child to join everything, but a child gains status as well as enjoyment if he can participate in some activities.

The foster parents have the right to make decisions about the day to day living conditions and activities of a child in their care. The child should be able to look to a stable, secure source of knowledge and love when he needs or wants something. If a foster parent has doubts about something the child asks for, the foster parent might say "Let me think it over," or "Dad and I need to discuss this," rather than, "I'll ask the caseworker." Foster parents can give permission for the child to engage in routine types

of activities, allow the child to spend the night with friends, decide on dating privileges, curfew hours, etc. Foster parents will want to use the same caution and discretion in these decisions as they would with their own child.

Dating

Dating is a normal aspect of adolescence that is important for an individual's development and social adjustment. For the adolescent foster child dating may be a problematic area as a result of uncertainty and insecurity about social acceptance and peer relationships or from conflict with the foster parent over whom the adolescent wants to date, the time of the date, and what activity is planned.

Foster parents should be clear that the agency expects the foster parent to exercise responsibility for setting the rules that govern the adolescent's dating activity as well as for providing the adolescent with the guidance and occasional advice that may be needed to make dating a source of enjoyment and personal enrichment.

Income Tax Reporting

The Internal Revenue Service has ruled that agency board payments to foster parents or reimbursement for expenses incurred in caring for a child in foster care need not be reported on the foster parents' federal income tax reports. For further information, foster parents should contact the Internal Revenue Service.

Chores

Performing chores that result in maintaining household order or in satisfying a family need will help children to feel useful and to learn to be responsible. Giving chores to children however, should be done in a thoughtful way and in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Arrange for the child to feel successful in the early stages of the task or chore that he or she is given.
2. Start with simple chores and tasks and work up to more complex ones as the child's skills increase and ability to persevere becomes stronger.
3. Design or alter the chore or activity according to the child's level of development.
4. Suit the chores or tasks to the child's individual interests.
5. Be cheerful, supportive, and understanding when the child's capacity or interest diminishes and show your willingness to be helpful. The child who is given help when he needs it is best prepared to give help to others when they need it.

To help decide if a chore given to a child is a reasonable one the foster parent should consider these questions:

1. Is it a chore the child can be expected to do well?
2. Will it take too much time for him to do it?

3. Is the chore important to the family?
4. Has the child had a part in choosing the chore or work activity?
5. Is the child likely to become bored with the routine?
6. Does the child get enough praise and recognition for doing the chore well or is good performance just taken for granted while poor performance is criticized.
7. Does the child seem to feel good about performing the chore?

Employment

The agency expects foster parents to encourage adolescents to discuss employment goals with the caseworkers and also to be prepared to offer adolescents some guidance about employment issues. Prospective employment should have the promise of a positive experience that contributes to a stronger personal identity and to feelings of self-worth. It is not in the best interests of adolescents to take temporary or part time jobs for which they are not emotionally ready or which could turn out to be negative experiences as a result of poor supervision, training, job relationships, discrimination, exploitation, etc. Two guiding principles for foster parents are these: (1) Part time employment of a young adolescent in foster care is acceptable as long as it accomplishes for the adolescent foreseen goals and is neither exploitative nor preclusive of the schooling to which every adolescent is entitled; (2) part time employment is appropriate when it provides an experience that supports the adolescent's drive for independence and contributes to the adolescents emerging identity as a person who can work and meet the expectations of an employer.

School

School is a problem area for many children in foster care. The circumstances that lead to their placement have almost always resulted in a lack of support for their emotional growth and in an assault on their feelings. As a result, many foster children do not have the inner resources for meeting the academic and social challenges they face in the average school setting. Learning readiness requires a supply of energy that is not completely bound up in a struggle with emotional problems; the mastery of reading, writing and arithmetic requires the ability to tolerate tension and postpone action long enough to concentrate on what is being read or to listen attentively to what is being discussed.

For most foster children the nature of their school adjustment will depend, to some extent, on the effort by the schools to identify and respond to their special needs. It also depends, to some extent, on the involvement of the foster parents with their foster children. Foster parents who have a positive attitude toward school and academic learning and provide active support to a foster child in coping with the challenges of the school often make a significant difference in determining the direction of the foster child's intellectual and social development.

School Insurance

Most children in foster care have full coverage for medical expenses through the Medicaid program. Foster parents may inform the school of this fact. The child's caseworker should be consulted regarding any problems related to this subject.

Special School Needs

Foster parents concerned about a foster child's school adjustment should call the child's caseworker for assistance in arranging a conference with school guidance counselors and psychologists.

For some preschool children, a Head Start or nursery school program may be beneficial. If a foster parent thinks a child should be enrolled in such a program, the child's caseworker should be called for assistance in making plans for admission to the program.

The need for special items or services, such as tutoring, nursery school, tuition, etc., must be discussed with the caseworker to determine whether the agency will be able to cover the expenses.

Educational Benefits

Foster children may qualify for scholarships for education or training beyond high school. The child's caseworker or high school guidance counselor should be contacted for information about scholarships.

When the plan for a foster child includes attending a college or university, a district may pay room and board directly to the college. Such payment cannot be used for tuition and cannot exceed the local district payments for foster care. Arrangements for direct payment must be made by the local district with the college or university.

Liability

Foster parents are exempted from liability for damages to certain real or personal property caused by a foster child who is over ten and less than 18 years of age. The General Obligations Law, the General Municipal Law, the Education Law and the Executive Law exempt foster parents from responsibility for willful, malicious, or unlawful damages or destruction to real or personal property done by a foster child who is at least ten years of age but less than eighteen years of age. In addition to damages done to personal or real property belonging to an individual, foster parents also are exempt from responsibility for damages done to public property belonging to a municipality, a school district, or state government. Foster parents also generally are not liable for damages caused by a foster child under the age of ten.

It should be noted, however, that there may be cases when a foster parent may be liable for damages caused by a foster child regardless of the child's age, such as when the foster parent advised or directed the foster child to perform the tort or where the foster parent knew or should have known of the possibility that a tort would be committed and failed to provide the foster child with proper supervision. (A tort is a civil wrong for which the injured party is entitled to compensation.) Under certain circumstances, a local commissioner of social services may be liable for damages resulting from improper supervision.

Driving

Driver's license application -- Section 502(2) of the Vehicle and Traffic Law provides that 16 and 17 year olds need the written consent of their parent or guardian in order to obtain a driver's license, except for 17 year olds who have completed an approved driver education course. This means that natural parents must consent to the

application of children who were placed voluntarily or by a court order. For children whose natural parents have lost the rights of custody and guardianship the local district must give consent to apply for a license. A child who has obtained a learner's permit or license with parental consent should not be allowed to drive the foster parent's car unless the foster parent has assumed responsibility for providing insurance coverage and until the foster parent has made clear the expectations and obligations associated with the privilege of using the family's car.

Foster Parent Associations

Foster Parent Associations began in the 1960s as a way of getting foster parents together informally to lend support to one another. The association may be an informal weekly coffee hour to discuss common problems and exchange ideas or a highly structured organization that is actively involved in policy making and legislative lobbying. The general purposes of Foster Parent Associations are --

To lend support to foster parents

To create channels of communication among foster parents

To assist in problem-solving

To advocate for the rights of foster parents

These organizations can be valuable sources of information, support, and advocacy for foster parents. The agency will provide foster parents with information about whom to contact regarding membership in a local or state association of foster parents.

Consent Issues

It is important for foster parents to be clear about the rights and responsibilities of natural parents to give their consent to activity decisions that are made by children while in foster care. The following represent important situations in which the need for parental consent has often been unclear.

Permission to quit school

Section 3205 of the Education Law requires that children aged 6 to 16 shall attend school unless they have received a high school diploma. Further, board of education in cities and union free school districts with a population over 4500 can require children to attend to age 17. No one has legal authority to give "permission" to quit school prior to these ages. After those ages are reached, other things being equal, it is up to the child whether to continue in school; no one's permission is needed to let the child quit. Section 3212 of the Education Law makes it the obligation of the parents, guardian and/or custodian of a child to see to it that the child attends school in accordance with the requirements of law. Department regulations at 18 NYCRR Section 444.5(c)(2) and 444.8(c)(2) specifically require foster parents to arrange for children to attend school in compliance with the Education Law.

Permission to Smoke

Foster parents retain the right to forbid or allow smoking in their own home as they see fit. Given the plethora of evidence about the dangers to health of

smoking, however, and since local districts, agencies, and foster parents all have some obligation to help protect the health of children in foster care, no one should assume the authority to permit a child to smoke except a child's natural parent on those occasions when the child is within the care of the natural parent. Although smoking by children is not itself outlawed, sale of tobacco products to minors is illegal under Section 260.20(5) of the Penal Law and Section 399-e of the General Business Law; this shows a clear public policy on the part of the State that smoking by children is a practice to be discouraged.

Permission to Marry

Section 15 of the Domestic Relations Law provides that children aged 16 or 17 need the written consent of their parent(s) or guardian(s) to marry. Persons age 18 and over in foster care need no consent from anyone.

Permission to Buy a Car

Buying a car is something that any foster child can do without anyone's permission if they have the cash on hand. (Whether they can drive it is another issue.) The real question is whether they can enter into a contract and whose permission might be necessary. As a general rule, minors under age 18 cannot be held to contracts, pursuant to Section 3-101(1) of the General Obligations Law. This does not mean they cannot enter into contracts; it means they cannot be forced to comply with contracts. Therefore, foster children under 18 may enter into contracts without anyone's permission, if they can find anyone foolish enough to contract with them. The practical situation that usually results is that minors can only enter into a contract if an adult will also sign the contract, because the adult can be held to the contract. Foster parents are not obligated to co-sign contracts if foster children in their care want to enter into a contract. Foster parents may co-sign if they wish but are advised not to as they will remain liable on the contract if the child fails to fulfill his contractual obligations. Persons age 18 or over in foster care may enter into contracts without anyone's permission and they are bound by contracts they enter into.

Permission to Join Armed Forces

Federal law at 10 U.S.C.A. Section 505(a) provides that persons aged 18 or over may enlist in the armed forces and persons aged 17 may enlist with written consent of their parent or guardian. This means that, for 17 year olds, consent of the natural parents is needed where care and custody of the child have been transferred to the local commissioner. Consent of the local district is needed where guardianship of the child has been transferred to the local commissioner. Children under 16 also need judicial consent. Children age 16 and younger cannot enlist and those age 18 and over need no one's permission

Transportation for medical care of a foster child

For children eligible for medicaid state regulations (18 NYCRR 505.10) require public agencies to provide transportation and other related travel expenses as necessary. Travel expenses include the cost of transportation by ambulance, invalid coach, taxicab, common carrier or other appropriate means; the cost of outside meals and lodging en route to, while receiving medical care, and returning from a medical resource; and the cost of an attendant to accompany the patient, if medically or otherwise necessary.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Procedures for Emergencies

I. What is an emergency?

An emergency, within the context of foster placement, is a situation that occurs outside the normal responsibilities of a foster parent and demands immediate advice or assistance. Emergencies include such occurrences as —

A medical emergency, where there is danger to life and limb

A crisis created by an unexpected contact (telephone call or visit) from a parent or any unauthorized visitor

An acute problem at school

Any contact by a law enforcement agency concerning the child

A child's running away, disappearance or unauthorized absence

A sudden emergency in the foster family that requires the foster parent's absence, and substitute care for the child is necessary.

II. Procedures for emergencies.

Foster parents should contact the agency immediately if emergency medical care becomes necessary, as the agency has someone available or on-call at all times who can consent to the necessary care. This is true regardless of how the child came into foster care. In the case of a voluntary placement, and possibly in the case of a court-ordered placement, the natural parents may also have the right to authorize medical treatment, but foster parents should work through the agency, as that is the most efficient way available to them for securing consent for medical treatment.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Police _____

Fire _____

Ambulance _____

Poison Center _____

Hot Line _____

Doctor _____

Parents at work:

Neighbors:

In case of run away: _____

School Telephone Numbers

Child: _____
_____ school

Main Number _____

Principal _____

Guidance Counselor: _____ tel. _____

Teachers _____

Hot lunch procedure: _____

After school activities:	Time
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Child: _____
_____ school

Main Number _____

Principal _____

Guidance Counselor: _____ tel. _____

Teachers _____

Hot lunch procedure: _____

After school activities:	Time
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Child: _____
_____ school

Main Number _____

Principal _____

Guidance Counselor: _____ tel. _____

Teachers _____

Hot lunch procedure: _____

After school activities:	Time
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Child: _____
_____ school

Main Number _____

Principal _____

Guidance Counselor: _____ tel. _____

Teachers _____

Hot lunch procedure: _____

After school activities:	Time
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Agency Telephone Numbers

Agency _____

Main No. _____

After Hours _____

Supervisor:

Home telephone

Placement Worker:

Case Workers:

Foster parents:

Foster Parents Association:

Medical Telephone Numbers

Doctors:

Telephone

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Dentists:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Drugstores:

_____	_____
_____	_____

Authorized Numbers:

child

number

renewal date

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Emergency Medical Authorization:

_____	_____
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Allergies or Special Medical Information:

GUIDE FOR FOSTER PARENTS ON THE SAFE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF A CHILD'S MEDICATIONS

In order for children to receive the greatest benefit from drugs, it is essential that foster parents make certain medications are taken exactly as prescribed. This information is on the prescription label. Foster parents should read the label carefully. If foster parents should have any questions about a medication which the label does not answer, they should feel free to ask their pharmacist or the child's physician.

Whenever foster parents receive a medication from a pharmacist, **THEY SHOULD KNOW THE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS:**

What is the name of the medication?

What is the purpose of the medication?

Are there any precautions they should be aware of while the child is taking the medication?

Are there any other medications the child should not take at the same time?

Is there any food or beverage the child should avoid?

How and when should the child take the medication?

How long should the child continue to take the medication?

Can the prescription be refilled and how?

Have all prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy so that the pharmacist can keep a complete record of the child's medications.

If the child visits more than one doctor the foster parents should tell each one what medications the child is taking. This should include prescription and nonprescription drugs, as both could interfere with a new medication that the doctor may prescribe for the child. The doctor should be told if a prescription was not filled or if the child did not take the medication. Otherwise, he may conclude that the medication was not effective.

In addition to their benefits, some drugs have additional effects beyond the intended effect, some of which can be detrimental to a person's health. Side effects vary from one patient to another, and at times a particular medication produces an unpleasant side effect in one patient, whereas another medication that is almost identical will have no unpleasant effect. If a child develops an unexpected side effect, the foster parent should contact the child's physician.

Be careful in self-medicating with any medication that can be purchased without a prescription. Always read the directions on the folder and if not understandable, consult your pharmacist. These medicines are usually designed to alleviate a symptom and they do not cure a disease. Do not continue using the medicine if the first few doses do not help to relieve the symptom. If a symptom is severe or persistent, consult a doctor.

If a child is taking a drug that has been prescribed by a physician, always be careful in self-medicating with drugs that can be purchased without a prescription, i.e., cough syrups, laxatives, nasal sprays. Some drugs can interact and cause unpleasant reactions. Always check with the pharmacist before purchasing these products.

Do not give any medication to a child less than one year of age unless it has been prescribed by the doctor. Do not give any nonprescription drugs to children between 1 and 12 years of age unless the doses for the different age groups are listed on the package container.

Remember that the medication foster parents have received for a child is specifically for the child. It should not be shared with other members of the family or friends who seem to have the same symptoms.

The way in which drugs are stored is important. Certain drugs require refrigeration; if this is the case there will be a Keep Refrigerated label on the container. A cool, dry, dark cupboard is the best storage for most medications; remember that a bathroom medicine cupboard often becomes hot and steamy and is not the best place to store medications. Above all, keep medications in a safe place and away from the reach or sight of small children.

Always keep medication in the container in which it was received from the pharmacist. Do NOT remove the label until all the medication is finished. The information on the label is necessary to properly identify the patient, the physician, the drug, the instructions for use, and the date the prescription was dispensed.

Over the years numerous drugs may have been prescribed for the child. If these drugs are discontinued by the doctor, destroy the remaining portion by flushing it down the toilet. By doing this you avoid building up a cupboard of old, outdated, and potentially dangerous drugs.

It is recommended that the foster parent maintain a careful record of important facts about the child's health and medications. This allows the foster parent to have a complete list of the medications, should the child see another physician. If the child moves to another home, the medication record and the medication should be given to the agency caseworker responsible for helping the child to make the transition from a foster home to another placement. It is important that the new pharmacist and doctor are thoroughly familiar with the medications the child has taken and his or her medical history.⁽¹⁾

(1) Medication Guide, Dorothy L. Smith, Pharm. D., Lea and Febiger, Philadelphia, 1977, pages 27-29. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

