

Racine County Human Services Department
Foster Parent Handbook
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Foster Planning and Permanency Planning

The Racine County Human Services Department is a public agency committed to preserving and strengthening the family unit whenever possible. The agency operates on the philosophy of Permanency Planning: That children have a right to grow up in a stable home setting and to have permanent membership in a family, preferably their own, to give them a sense of belonging.

The agency uses case work and supportive services, plus outside community resources, to help families resolve their problems and stay together.

When children are unable to live with their own family because of special needs or family problems, it is necessary to find a substitute arrangement for their care. If relatives are unable or unwilling to take children in, and if the child can function satisfactorily in a community setting, then the agency relies on foster parents to provide the nurturing family environment.

When a child is placed in family foster care, the foster parents become members of the agency team. They give interim care to the child, help the child keep contacts with the family, and keep the family involved in the child's appointments. They are active partners with the agency for the child. The ultimate goal usually is for the child to be reunited with his/her parents.

An unofficial text of Chapter 48 can be found at www.dhfs.wi.us/Children/CPS/index.HTM or by searching the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services home page at www.dhfs.stat.wi.us/.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter One, page 11, for further information about foster planning and permanency planning.

Your Foster Home License

Initial Foster Home License

The laws of Wisconsin require that every foster home be licensed to show that it has met the standards set forth in the stated statutes or in the Wisconsin Administrative Code for Foster Homes - DCF 56 and Chapter 48 of the Children's Code. The license is renewed every two years as long as licensing requirements continue to be met and you and the agency wish to continue working together. If the licensee no longer meets the licensing standards and codes, in accordance with DCFS, the license will not be renewed.

The license specifies the number, ages, and sexes of the children you are eligible to foster. At any time the license can be amended to reflect changes in your living situation or preference of ages, sexes, or number of children. A Foster Care Worker will meet with you and your family two to three times before an initial foster home license is issued. The application process includes written applications, medical certificates from the family physician, proof of liability insurance on home and autos, a home visit with personal interviews, police background checks, and reference letters from friends and employers. The home will be checked to see that it meets health as well as fire and safety standards as set forth by DCF 56.

License Renewal

Approximately two years after the first license is issued, a Foster Care Worker will engage you in the reevaluation of your foster license application. Together you will review the past two years' experience as foster parents. This is an opportune time to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make known to the agency what was helpful or lacking. The State rules of foster home licensing are also reviewed for compliance. Earnest participation in the reevaluation process is taken seriously by the agency as another tool by which we can critically assess the vitality of the foster home program.

Foster Care and Adoption

Foster parents are cautioned to not use foster parenting as a substitute for adoption. Contrary to an adoptive placement, the goal of foster care is essentially to reunite the child with his or her family. The Case Manager assigned to the child is also assigned to work with the parents to remedy conditions that led to the child's removal from their home. Should efforts fail, adoption may be considered and, at that time, the foster parent could become an adoptive resource. The goal of foster care is to achieve a permanent plan for each child and long-term foster care is rarely an option.

The child's Case Manager may ask a foster parent if they would be interested in adopting the child should the parents' rights be terminated. *This is a standard question and does not necessarily mean that the foster parents will be guaranteed the opportunity to adopt the child.* Foster parents should also realize that, at any time during the child's placement, appropriate biological relatives of the child may become interested in a placement of the child. Should this occur, the Case Manager is obligated under law to consider the relative for placement. This could even occur when the foster parent was considered as the child's adoptive resource.

Foster parents are not the legal guardians or the legal custodians of their foster children. In a standard foster care placement, the child's biological parents retain legal guardianship of the child; the agency has legal custody. The foster parent then has "physical placement." The legal guardian has the right to give or deny the child permission for major decisions concerning the child, such as the child's religious training, enlistment in the armed forces, major surgery, marriage, release of confidential records, and any other major decision concerning the child. Legal custodians have the right to physical custody of the child and the duty to protect, train, and discipline the child. In practice, the idea of legal custody often gets confused with the question of who actually has physical control of the child. The person who has "physical placement" of the child is responsible for the day-to-day care and physical control of the child, including most ordinary decisions.

On rare occasions, parents and the agency will enter into a Voluntary Parental Agreement, which gives the agency the right to place a child without Court intervention. This arrangement is used only for very limited situations, like hospitalization of a parent or while a parent is deciding to place their child for adoption. In such cases, the parents may change their minds and take the child back at any time. If the child remains in a Voluntary Parental Agreement for longer than six months, a Court review of the situation is then initiated.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter One, page 14, for further information about foster care and adoption.

Placement of Foster Children

The major purpose of the foster home study and licensing process is to define the kind of child who will fit into a particular family and to assess the suitability of applicants to be foster parents. There is an attempt to match children and homes as closely as possible. Some of the factors considered in selecting a particular home for a particular child include the ages and experience of the foster parents, number and ages of other children in the home, location (especially if the child is in school), and special problems or needs of the foster child.

When your home is selected for a child, you will be contacted by a Foster Care Worker and/or Case Manager assigned to the case. He/she will describe the child, the reason for placement, probable length of placement, and other important fact. Ordinarily we cannot answer all questions at this time simply because the information is not available. If it is not an emergency situation, the Case Manager may make arrangements for a "pre-placement visit." This is a time for you and the child to meet in your home. It may last anywhere from several hours to several days, depending on the age of the child and the time available.

After the pre-placement visit(s), you and the Case Manager will be able to decide if the child is likely to work out with your family and the child has an opportunity to prepare for the move. One has the right to decide against taking a particular child. This should be done before a final placement decision is reached.

Foster children and new foster families commonly experience what is known as a "honeymoon" period early in the placement. This is a time when the child is on his/her best behavior and the foster family may make special allowances for his/her "adjustment." Sooner or later (sooner with younger children) and usually by the end of six weeks, the "honeymoon" ends and the child will test both your rules and your commitment. Most experienced foster families have found that it is best to start out "strict" and loosen up on the rules after it is clear the child can handle more freedoms. (Remember that adult control means security to a child.) Sticking with a child and working through behavior problems is better than either giving in or giving up.

The Case Manager will be in frequent contact during the initial adjustment period. Each child, or each sibling group, has their own Case Manager. Case Managers are assigned to children, not foster homes.

Although Foster Care Workers initially coordinate the placement of a child in a foster home, they are not the child's assigned Case Manager. The Foster Care Worker deals mainly with ensuring the foster home and foster parent continues to meet licensing standards and are providing appropriate care to the children placed in the home. Therefore, the Case Manager is responsible for the child's case, such as visitation with parents, school issues, permanency planning, Court hearings, counseling, and the clothing allowance. The Foster Care Worker is responsible for issues relating to the foster home such as licensing violations, concerns, troubleshooting, foster parent support and retention, recruitment of new foster homes, and foster parent training

and licensing qualifications as it relates to the Wisconsin Administrative Code of Foster Homes DCF 56. The Foster Care Worker is always available to aid the foster parent in contacting the appropriate person regarding a particular issue.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 7, for further information about the placement of foster children.

Confidentiality of Information

In order for you to make a good decision about whether or not to take a particular child and so that you can provide the best possible care, it is often necessary for the Case Manager to share information about the child and his/her family which is potentially embarrassing or damaging. **You must not share this information with friends, neighbors, or other foster parents and often not with your own children.**

You are advised not to discuss, under any circumstances, your foster child in public, such as at a supermarket, church, school, or at a foster parent event. The person near you may be a relative or friend of the child's family and does not have a right to that information. It is also embarrassing for the child to be singled out. Consult your Case Manager for ways to deal with explaining who the new child is in your home.

The child's individual case plan is a confidential matter to be discussed with the Case Manager at agency staffings and Court hearings. Some professionals (e.g., school administrators, doctors, etc.) will need to have some background data on your foster child. You should refer them to the agency Case Manager for details.

A foster child cannot be photographed or interviewed by newspaper, radio, or television reporters without written permission of the guardian. Foster parents are not to talk to any media person about a foster child. Refer inquiries to the Case Manager, who will coordinate further contact. Confidentiality of information about children and their families is protected under Wisconsin Statutes and Federal law. Violation of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, such as the loss of your ability to be a foster parent.

It is important that foster parents remember that any information pertaining to current or previous placements is confidential. If a child is removed from a foster home or returned home, the foster parent should not attempt to seek out information about the child (e.g., teacher, new foster parents, biological parents, counselors, Case Manager, etc.). **The illegal sharing of a child's confidential information by a foster parent could result in the revocation of a foster home license.**

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, page 8, for further information about a foster child's confidential information.

Your Foster Child

Foster families are carefully selected and trained to offer the best environment for children. Foster children usually come from multi-problem homes. Because of clinical dependency, developmental disabilities, financial problems, lack of extended family or community support, or long-established patterns of unstructured family life, your foster child may come from a home which has different values and expectations from your own.

Many foster children are developmentally delayed, impulsive, easily frustrated, physically or verbally aggressive, irresponsible, mildly depressed, or withdrawn. They may not be used to having sit-down family-style meals, regular chores, clean clothes, scout or 4-H meetings, supervised homework assignments, or any of a number of other practices which your own children accept as a matter of course. Without being critical of the child's parents, it will be good for you to offer these aspects of family life. Your foster child may not seem to appreciate these advantages and no matter how well your home compares to the home he/she left, the child will probably prefer their own family life to yours and will always feel a strong loyalty to his/her blood relatives.

It is important to respect rather than ridicule the child's loyalty to his/her family. Allow the child to speak of his/her family. To do so non-judgmentally will benefit everyone concerned in the long run. Criticizing a child's family makes a child defensive and is ultimately damaging to the foster child/foster family relationship. Regardless of family conditions, the most overwhelming thing that can happen to a child is to be taken from the home that he/she has known and to be placed in a home of strangers. Therefore, be prepared for the foster child to experience the following feelings:

1. **Shock** - A total disbelief of what is happening to him/her; the child functions automatically. The shock of placement for a child may be reduced by pre-placement visits to the foster home in which the parent accompanies the child. Also, it is helpful for the parent to explain to the child why he/she is being placed.
2. **Anger** - Adolescents may run away.
3. **Regression and Protest** - The child regresses to a level that is comfortable. Bed wetting, thumb sucking, or acting juvenile for his/her age may occur. Physical illnesses such as toothaches, upper respiratory and ear infections are common. These illnesses are real and must be treated.
4. **Despair** - The child goes through a grieving process over the loss of his/her former home and family. This period can take as long as nine months.
5. **Hope** - The child begins to "open up" to the foster family. For instance, the child is able to talk about his/her "other mother" or "other father." Your Case

Manager is available to help you understand adjustment problems children experience when placed in a foster home.

Licensing rules require that foster parents “make opportunities available to each child in care for religious education and attendance at services compatible with his/her religious heritage.” If parents express strong preferences we attempt to place children in foster families who share the same religious faith. If you are of another religion, other arrangements can be made for home visits to be scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays or a local church might include your foster child in their activities. Parents and foster children have the right to refuse to attend religious activities.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, pages 16 - 22, for further information about your foster child and their process of adjustment.

Use of Car Seats and Belts

Per the Wisconsin Department of Transportation:

Child safety seat law

In basic terms:

- Children must be in a car seat until they reach age 4 and weigh 40 pounds, and in a booster seat until they reach age 8, are more than 80 pounds in weight, or more than 4 feet, 9 inches tall.
- Tiered structure applies:
 - If a child is less than 1 year old or less than 20 pounds, the child must be in a rear-facing child seat in the back seat (if so equipped).
 - If a child is at least one year old and 20 pounds, but less than four years old or less than 40 pounds, the child must be in a forward- or rear-facing child seat in the back seat (if so equipped).
 - Children age 4 to age 8, and between 40-80 pounds, and no more than 4 feet, 9 inches must be in a forward- or rear-facing child seat in the back seat (if so equipped) or a booster seat.
- The penalty for non-compliance depends on the age of the child.
 - If the child is less than 4 years of age, the total penalty is \$175.30
 - If the child is between ages 4 and 8, the total penalty is \$150.10 for the first offense, \$200.50 for a second offense, and \$263.50 for third and subsequent offenses
- There are no exemptions from these rules in allowing the removal of a child from a restraint to attend to personal needs (such as feeding or diapering).
- A child who, because of a medical condition, body size or a physical disability, is incapable of being transported in a child safety restraint system, may be transported without a safety restraint system with physician approval.

Specific questions about child seats/booster seats should be directed to:

WINS (Wisconsin Information Network for Safety)
866/511-9467 or wins9467@sbcglobal.net

Further information and recommendations are available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/CPS>

For more information, refer to "Foster Home Safety" in the blue binder or see Child safety restraint systems, Section 347.48, Wisconsin Statutes.

Questions To Ask When A Child Is Placed At Your Home

(Note: This does not apply to emergencies)

1. Why is this child being placed?
2. What is the child's previous placement experience?
3. What is the child's legal status?
4. What is the child's situation? What are the parents' names and what is their contact information?
5. What is the plan for the child and the expected length of placement?
6. Will there be pre-placement visits?
7. What is the child's understanding of why he/she has moved/separated from the parents?
8. Where are the parents?
9. Will the parents visit? If so, where? How often?
10. Are there brothers/sisters? If so, where are they? What are their birth dates?
11. When will the Case Manager visit or call?
12. Is the child in good health? Are there any allergies? Is the child up-to-date on immunizations? Does the child take any medications? When was the child's last dental checkup?
13. When was the last physical?
14. What is the child's medical number?
15. Religion - Is this important or not?
16. What grade is the child in at school? What school does the child attend?
17. Are there school problems?
18. Does the child have any social behavior problems or unusual habits?
19. Will there be a clothing allowance? Does the child have enough clothes?
20. What will make the child feel at home (e.g., food likes and dislikes, favorite toys, etc.)?

21. What is the maintenance rate? When can I expect to get paid? When will the results of the CANS assessment be shared?
22. If there is an emergency after office hours, who can I call? What is the phone number?
23. What are your (Case Manager) expectations of me (foster parent)?
24. Is the child potty trained?
25. Does the child take a bottle? If so, what kind of formula? Is the child on WIC?

Contact With the Child's Family

Ideally, we like to have the foster parents and the parents meet before a child is placed to help him/her make the transition from one home to another. This often is not possible, but your Case Manager will advise you on when and how contacts with the parents will be made.

It is the intent of the agency to keep the child's family involved as much as possible with parental responsibilities for the benefit of both the child and the family. By being placed in a foster home, the child's living experience with his/her family has come to an abrupt end. The parents whose child is placed experiences not only the loss of their child, but also a loss of parental power and self-esteem. Both go through a period of grief that must be recognized. The foster family is viewed as an extension of the child's family rather than as a replacement of it. When a child needs to be placed, it means his/her family is experiencing a current deficit in its capacity to function adequately. It does not mean that the child should be removed from membership in that family system. The foster parents and parents may decide to share a parental activity like agreeing on some particular task to be accomplished while the child is at home. It can also be arranged to have parents involved in school, medical, and dental appointments.

There may be times when disagreements occur between foster parents and the child's family. Difficulties usually arise because of value differences of the two families. Use the Case Manager's expertise to help minimize these differences. The child benefits from a sense of security when his/her two families set common objectives and have open negotiations around important issues.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Four, pages 6 - 12, for further information about contact with your child's family.

Visitation Policy for Foster Children

Most children in foster care have parents or other relatives with whom they wish to maintain contact. Visitation plans are established by the Case Manager to meet one or more of the following goals:

1. To help foster children maintain contact with important individuals in their lives.
2. To help foster children maintain a realistic idea of "life at home" and prevent fantasizing about their families.
3. To have the parents exercise their right to have contact with their child(ren).
4. To give parents and foster children a chance to work on problems and to practice skills in preparation for a return home.
5. To monitor progress or lack of progress in family relationships and parental abilities.
6. To carry out a Court order regarding visitations.

Visits should be used to see parents and other family members. Contact with peers should be approved by the Case Manager.

Visitation may take place in the foster home, in the parents' home, or at the agency. If necessary, it may supervised by the foster parents or by an agency employee. Visits are scheduled to be mutually convenient for all parties involved; sometimes compromises are necessary. It is expected that foster parents will make every effort to reasonably accommodate regular visitation and assist with transportation.

Per the foster home licensing rules: "No foster child may be punished by being deprived of...family interaction" per DCF 56.07 (5) (f). On the other hand, when visitation plans are disruptive of the overall foster care treatment program, some restrictions on visitation may have to be imposed. Restrictions on visitation are decided by the Case Manager.

Although it is not customarily done in every case, both foster parents have a right to ask that visitation plans be put in writing and that they include the following information:

1. The goal for long-term care
2. The goals for visitation
3. What is the family interaction plan

4. Who will provide transportation
5. Whether or not the visit will be supervised
6. Under what conditions the plan may be changed

Foster parents should inform their Case Manager of problems related to visitation and may make recommendations related to visitation plans. The Case Manager will make the final decision on visitation plans.

There are several basic expectations which can help make visitation easier for everyone. The foster parents and parental expectations are outlined below.

Expectations for Foster Parents

Foster parents are expected to:

- a. Provide the children with an ongoing emotional environment in which they feel free to continue to love their parents and to spend time with them. This would include encouraging children to remember parents on special occasions and allowing them to phone on a reasonable basis (the time and length of the phone calls are to be in accordance with the family rules).
- b. Forward to the agency copies of school reports each time they are received, the calendar of school events, notice of parent-teacher conferences, school programs, etc.
- c. Inform the agency of any significant change in any of the children's physical or emotional status and give him/her the name of the provider of care so that he/she has the option of contacting the person and being of assistance to the child in treatment. This includes medical, dental, psychological care, etc.
- d. Be reasonably flexible in arranging dates of visitation where it doesn't interfere with important family events or prior-planned activities.
- e. Refrain from withholding visitation as a punishment to the children.
- f. Provide or arrange for a child's necessary transportation, unless otherwise determined by the child's team or treatment team. Per DCF 56.05 (c) 1(k)

Expectations for Parents

Parents are expected to:

- a. Take a consistent, predictable role in their children's lives on a continuing basis, using the time with them to strengthen their relationship with each child.
- b. Encourage the children's good feelings about their foster family.
- c. Use discretion as to the time and frequency of his/her phone calls to the children and observe the rules of the household as to the length of the phone calls.
- d. Allow the children to experience with them things that are meaningful in their lives and, in turn, share in activities which they find meaningful.

Points to Remember About Visitation

Because the visits are bound to be a "mixed bag" as far as the child's feelings are concerned, it stands to reason that his/her behavior will reflect the turmoil, perhaps during the visit, and nearly always afterwards. It is important to know that a visit may result in temporary upset behavior including:

1. Withdrawal from foster parents and other children in the home;
2. Anger and disruptive actions;
3. Unexplained tears and outburst or silence;
4. Going back to earlier, more difficult, patterns of action or eating.

A child may suffer a somewhat delayed reaction of greater disappointment when it becomes apparent that parental promises of phone calls, letters, or presents are not being kept. If it is apparent that this has happened, it can be helpful to the child to discuss the matter with sympathy and tact and to point out that we all, at times, want to do things for someone and yet for one reason or another find that we are unable. You can help your foster child by trying to make the visits as positive as possible and by sharing with your Case Manager the child's reactions.

Remember to document all scheduled visits, whether they occur or not. It is necessary for the Case Manager to know if the parent is visiting as scheduled. This information is crucial in evaluating and assessing case progress.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Four, pages 6 - 12, for further information about contact with your child's family.

Healthcare

As of August 1, 2014 all children placed in foster care will receive their healthcare through the Care4Kids program. Care4Kids is a Medicaid program that provides comprehensive healthcare to children entering Out-of-Home Care (OHC). It includes a team of professionals dedicated to meeting the individual needs of the children placed in your home. The Care4Kids program is administered by Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and Children's Community Health Plan. Children placed in your home will receive an initial health screen at the Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) located at 2405 Northwestern Avenue, Suite 205, Racine, WI within 2 business days of placement in the home. In order to ensure the appointment is scheduled during this timeframe, please call the CAC to schedule a Care4Kids health screen appointment at the time of placement.

Racine County Child Advocacy Center
2405 Northwestern Avenue, Suite 205
Racine, WI 53404
Phone: 262/898-7970
Fax: 262/635-6621

The State requires that every foster child must have a yearly medical and dental examination. It is now required that your foster child receive his initial physical exam within 30 days of placement. This is to meet the requirements set forth by the Health Check Program. You must submit to your Case Manager the original health form received from the doctor. *Be sure to keep a copy for your files.* Notify your pediatrician that you have a new member in your household and make an appointment for your foster child's physical as soon as possible.

Some children, when placed, are already under a physician's care. You will be informed when this occurs. Every effort will be made to keep appointments with the family's physician to provide continuity of medical services.

A medical card (Medical Assistance or Title XIX) is issued for every child. This card covers most routine medical/dental services and prescriptions. Remind the physician that the child has a medical card, as all prescriptions are not covered by Medical Assistance. Do not pay any physician/dentist or prescription bills, as the agency is not able to reimburse foster parents for Title XIX costs. You should receive your medical card about three weeks after placement.

Foster parents are trusted to handle minor illnesses and accidents as they would for their own children. For major illnesses and emergencies, call the physician first, then notify your Case Manager or his/her supervisor as soon as possible. If necessary, take your foster child to the hospital emergency room and notify your Case Manager immediately. If the emergency takes place on a weekend, holiday, or between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 a.m., contact the Crisis Worker at 638-7720.

If a child requires surgery or certain medical treatment, consent by the guardian (usually the parent) is needed. If you can notify the parent that signature is required

(in most situations you will be informed where the parents can be reached) or notify the Case Manager/their supervisor. If the parents are unable to be located, the judge must give consent or appoint a temporary guardian who can give consent for surgery; this will be handled by your Case Manager during normal hours or the Crisis Worker after hours.

You may sign for immunizations and treatment for routine “well” check-ups or when your foster child is ill. Always identify yourself as the “foster parents” and sign as such.

Please contact the Healthcare Coordination Team to help with:

- Access to services,
- Provider referral assistance, or
- Questions related to Care4Kids benefits

The Healthcare Coordination Team can be reached toll-free at 855/371-8104. They are available Monday - Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 31, for further information about the health care of your foster child.

Discipline and Your Foster Child

Good parenting and good discipline are the same in foster families as they are in any family. The goal of discipline should always be “teaching,” not punishment; teaching your child to be safe, to think ahead, to take care of personal possessions, and to respect the rights and feeling of others. Methods of training which foster parents are strongly encouraged to use are praise, modeling, limit-setting, explanation, withdrawal of privileges, and timeouts.

The State of Wisconsin has the following rules on discipline within a licensed foster home:

(5) DISCIPLINE:

- (a) Disciplinary action by a foster parent or any other person serving as a substitute caretaker in the absence of the foster parent shall be aimed at encouraging the foster child to understand what appropriate social behavior is.
- (b) The type of discipline imposed shall be appropriate to the child’s age and understanding.
- (c) Physical punishment of foster children is prohibited.
- (d) A licensee may not subject any foster child to verbal abuse, profanity, derogatory remarks about the child or his or her family, or to threats to expel the child from the home.
- (e) A licensee may not permit another adult or child, other than a responsible care provider, to discipline a foster child.

Note: If the licensee leaves the foster child in the care of another person, such as a babysitter, that person is responsible for providing the discipline in accordance with this chapter and any licensing agency policies.

- (f) No foster child may be punished by being deprived of meals, mail, or family visits.
- (g) No foster child may be punished or ridiculed for bed-wetting or other lapses in toilet training.
- (h) No foster child may be mechanically restrained or locked in any enclosure, room, closet, other part of the house, or elsewhere on the premises for any reason.
- (i) No foster child may be punished by being restricted to an unlocked room or area of the home except as follows:

1. A foster child under 6 years of age may be restricted to an unlocked living area of the home for not longer than 10 minutes for any episode of misbehavior. The foster child shall be within hearing of a responsible caretaker and shall be permitted use of the toilet, if necessary.
2. A foster child 6 to 10 years of age may be restricted to an unlocked living area of the home for not longer than 30 minutes for any episode of misbehavior. The foster child shall be within hearing of a responsible caretaker and shall be permitted use of the toilet, if necessary.
3. A foster child over 10 years of age may be restricted to an unlocked living area of the home for up to 60 minutes for any episode of misbehavior. The foster child shall be within hearing of a responsible caretaker and shall be permitted use of the toilet, if necessary.

Our agency will not tolerate the use of physical punishment with any age child or under any circumstance. **A FOSTER PARENT MAY NOT STRIKE A CHILD WITH THEIR HAND, FIST OR FOOT, SLAP, SPANK, HIT, PUNCH, OR SHAKE THE CHILD AT ANY TIME.**

You may learn about effective methods of discipline through foster parent training courses and through consultation with your Case Manager.

Supervision of Children

The care of the children is our utmost priority. Please be guided by the guidelines below.

1. A foster parent may not leave foster children without supervision by a responsible background check approved care provider.
2. A foster parent shall ensure that foster children 10 years of age or older receive responsible supervision appropriate to their age, maturity, and abilities as might reasonably be provided by a prudent parent to that parent's own children.
3. When in question, contact the Case Manager for clarification regarding supervision of the child(ren) in your home.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 28, for further information about discipline and your foster child.

Special Concerns Related to Foster Teens

Drug Use and Abuse

Adolescent drug abuse has increased rapidly in recent years. It is particularly frightening to foster parents who were not exposed to drug use during their own teenage years. Many parents who can “cope” with drinking problems feel totally unprepared to deal with drug use. You will be informed before placement if we know that your foster teen is on drugs. Our major concern with teens is that they are using drugs to cover up or avoid problems rather than learning how to cope with life in a more mature way.

Should your foster child become seriously involved with hard or addictive drugs, you will see some fairly dramatic changes in both his/her appearance and behavior.

What are some of the reasons the teenager may use or abuse alcohol and other drugs?

1. To follow the example of adults (e.g., parents and other adults who take drugs, drink, smoke, etc.).
2. The media glamorizes and normalizes the use of alcohol and other drugs.
3. Peer pressure—a need to be recognized as “one of the group.”
4. It’s fun and sociable.
5. Personal stress, anxiety, or depression.
6. To take a dare, a challenge.
7. Curiosity.
8. To test personal limits.
9. Because he/she is uninformed about the consequences.
10. A form of rebellion.

Teenage foster children often have special concerns which contribute to problems with alcohol and other drugs. The culture and lifestyle to which the teenager was accustomed prior to placement in foster care will certainly have an effect. There is also some possibility that alcohol and other drugs will be utilized as a crutch in coping with adjustment to the dynamics of placement in foster care. However, there is no evidence to demonstrate that the teenager in foster care will necessarily have more or fewer problems with alcohol and other drugs than any other teenager.

What can I as a foster parent do to deal with the problem of my teenager drinking and/or using other drugs?

1. Provide the teenager with factual information about drinking and drugs.
2. Discuss the teenager's feelings and show your own about the use of alcohol and other drugs.
3. It is important to try to demonstrate acceptance and support for the teenager in spite of drug use.
4. If the foster family uses any of the legal substances (e.g., alcohol or tobacco), they should always model appropriate responsible behavior in this area.
5. Speak with the teen's Case Manager to get professional counseling help if the problem interferes with the health of the adolescent, leads him/her to behavior which is dangerous to self or others, or involves potential trouble with the law.

Racine County has many resources which can help you deal with a drug-involved teen. We also regularly offer community education groups and foster parent training related to drugs and alcohol use and abuse.

It is illegal for foster parents to supply and/or purchase tobacco products for children under the age of 18. The use of tobacco products by children under 18 is also illegal and may not occur in a foster home. Help to educate your foster child about the dangers of tobacco use.

A foster parent may not smoke or allow another person to smoke in a foster home or in a vehicle when a foster child is present.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, pages 37 - 43, for further information on "Fostering Teens."

When Your Foster Child Runs Away

For the youngster in placement away from his own family, running away may be less running away than running back to the familiar and what has been lost. After the child has come to accept the separation from family and friends, running away indicates an immature pattern for coping with crisis.

What are some of the reasons a teenager may run away from home?

1. To escape a situation.
2. Influence of friends.
3. To test independence and prove he/she can make it on his/her own without his/her parents.
4. Influence of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
5. To avoid punishment.
6. To avoid disappointing parents when the teenager feels something he/she has done will not please parents.
7. Attention seeking.
8. To escape an intolerable situation because of emotional problems.
9. Attempt to control (i.e., exploit the threat of running away in order to manipulate parents).
10. The teenager may feel detached or unwanted (i.e., feels that he/she has no meaningful family relationships).
11. To act out feelings the teenager has about parents, siblings, or other important people in his/her life.

In addition to the reasons any teenager may run away, foster teenagers may have further factors or reasons:

1. The feeling of not belonging and lack of commitment to the foster family.
2. To test the foster parents' willingness to accept him/her.
3. To run to the parent.
4. Possibly following, or immediately prior to, the visit from the parents as a result of the emotional stress which accompanies the visit (i.e., conflict in

identifying with the parents and foster parents or a disappointment as a result of the visit).

5. To avoid getting involved with the foster parents. Teenagers are typically not in a stage of development where establishing relationships with "new parents" and risking feelings by establishing relationships with adults are important.
6. Attempt to control (i.e., exploit the threat of running away) in order to manipulate parents.
7. "If I run, they won't know what to do with me, so they'll send me home."

If your foster teen leaves without permission or fails to return within an hour of curfew, call the child's Case Manager and the on-call Crisis Worker at 638-7720 if after hours. The Case Manager will help you decide whether the child is simply testing house rules or curfew hours or whether he/she has indeed run away. In the former situation, local law enforcement authorities shall be contacted with a "Runaway/Missing Child" report. If the police then locate the child, he/she will be returned to your home. The Case Manager can also report the runaway to the Court and the Court may issue a non-secure Capias, which allows the police to take the child into custody and return the child to their placement.

If a secure Capias is issued, law enforcement will take the child into custody and place him/her into detention.

After the child returns, it is desirable to schedule a meeting to include the Case Manager, foster parents, and the child. The purpose of this session is to help the child learn how to discuss his/her problems and feelings with helping adults rather than relying on escape as a major coping mechanism.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, page 16, for further information about runaway foster children.

Refer to the Foster Care Emergency sheet in the cover of your blue binder.

Obtaining a Driver's License at Age 16

Like other 16-year-olds, foster teens are eager to get a driver's license. However, neither foster parents nor agency representatives have the authority to "sign for" foster children. Only the guardian can sign for the child. Before discussing this with your foster child, contact your Case Manager.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 39, for further information about foster teens and driver's licenses.

Firearms

Guns and other weapons are always a source of curiosity for children of all ages. This curiosity leads to the unfortunate and untimely deaths of many children each year.

Therefore, it is prohibited by State law that any foster parent has a loaded or otherwise dangerous weapon in the home. If you do have weapons/guns in your home, the following must be strictly adhered to:

1. All unloaded firearms and other dangerous weapons are to be stored and locked in an inaccessible area to children. *They are not to be displayed in glass-fronted gun cabinets.*
2. Ammunition shall be stored and locked separately in an inaccessible area.
3. BB guns are considered to be a firearm.

Continuing Placement Beyond Age 18

At their 18th birthday, foster children attain adult status. If they have not yet completed their high school education and wish to remain in foster care, the County may continue to support them until graduation or through age 19, whichever comes first. Because of the change in their legal status, they must understand that this program is entirely voluntary on their part. If they do not continue to attend school, receive passing grades, and comply with their Court order, funding will be discontinued.

In the spring of 2014 the Legislature passed and the Governor signed 2013 Wisconsin Act 334, which extends out-of-home care and other supports to youth in the child welfare system to age 21 for those youth who are enrolled in school full time under an Individualized Education Plan. The legislation was developed and supported by the Department of Children and Families. The new law becomes effective August 1, 2014.

Eligibility: Children who turn 18 while in foster care on or after August 1, 2014, are eligible to extend out-of-home care if the following criterion are met: (1) the youth is 18 years of age or older but under 21 years of age; (2) the youth is a full-time student at a secondary school or its technical or vocational equivalent; (3) an individualized education program under WI Stat. s. 115.787 is in effect for the youth; and (4) the youth agrees to comply with the terms of a court order or a voluntary transition-to-independent-living agreement with the agency. **Children who turned 18 prior to August 1, 2014 are not eligible for extended out-of-home care.** Extended care can be implemented through an extended court order or through a voluntary transition-to-independence agreement. Extension is voluntary on the part of the youth; for youth with a guardian, the guardian may elect to extend care.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 42, for further information about when your child turns 18.

Contact With the Agency

Your Case Manager

As a foster parent, your primary agency contact will be the Case Manager or service provider assigned to the child placed in your home. You will probably also have contact with a number of staff members in a variety of roles. It is essential that foster parents and agency staff work together as a team to best meet the needs of foster child(ren) and their families. Personal contacts will be scheduled between you and your Case Manager. You will also be informed when the Case Manager meets with your foster child. While the content of their discussion is confidential, you have a right to know if what they discussed will have an upsetting effect on the foster child afterwards.

It is good for the Case Manager and the foster parents to meet during times of relative calm. However,, you should never feel you are imposing on agency staff when you have questions, problems, or simply wish to keep us posted on your foster child's progress.

Make note of the child's Case Manager's name and phone number as well as the supervisor's name and phone number.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter One, page 19, for further information about working with the Agency and your Case Manager.

Important Information for After-Hours Emergencies

(5:00 p.m. - 7:30 a.m. Weekdays, Weekends, and Holidays)

Medical Emergency

Foster parents should have a copy of the *Medical Services Consent* form containing the parents' names and phone numbers. Take the child to a hospital or emergency facility, then call or have the hospital contact the parents. If the parents can't be reached, call the Racine County Human Services Department Access Worker at 638-7720. This Worker is available on a 24-hour basis.

Behavioral Emergency

If you have a child that runs away or if at any time you feel that there is danger that a foster child, or anyone else in your home may cause physical violence or serious property damage, or if you feel the foster child may be of harm to themselves or others, contact your local police department. If the situation does not include any of the above, but you feel it is a situation which needs immediate attention, call the Racine County Human Services Department Access Worker at 638-7720.

Serious Incident Reporting

A foster parent shall immediately notify the supervising agency and, if not the same, the licensing agency of all of the following:

1. Death of a foster child
2. Serious illness or injury of a foster child that requires the services of a licensed medical professional , including all of the following:
 - a. A broken bone.
 - b. A burn.
 - c. A concussion.
 - d. A wound requiring stitches.
 - e. The ingestion of poison or drug overdose.
 - f. A reportable communicable disease.

Note: Information regarding reportable communicable disease can be obtained from local county health departments.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter One, page 19, for further information about making after-hours, weekend, or holiday reports.

When the Child Is Discharged From Placement

Reasons

In all probability, you will be part of the planning for the child's departure. Nevertheless, when it actually happens, there may be a real feeling of letdown or loss. If the reasons for the child's departure are positive ones, it usually is easier. An example is the child who is happily rejoining the family which has dealt with problems, or the child who is being adopted into a family which will provide a permanent, secure home life. If the reasons seem less positive, departure may be more difficult. For instance, the child who is rejoining the family that seems to have reached a very marginal level of stability.

Sometimes a child may reunify, even when the level of care the biological family can provide is of a lesser quality than what the foster family can provide. Birth parents must show that they can provide a minimum of care while assuring safety. In other words, parenting skills and economic standing may lack in comparison to what the foster parents can provide. However, when safety concerns have been addressed and satisfactorily met, the child will be unified with the biological family. While this may be difficult to accept, reunification with the biological family is in the best interest of the child when possible.

What if the child is leaving to be placed in another foster home or in a group or residential treatment setting because the placement with you doesn't seem to be working out? You may logically and naturally feel disappointed. You should not regard yourselves as failures as a foster family because of it. Chances are, the decision will have been reached gradually by you and the Case Manager. Perhaps factors in the child's personality, background, or behavior make your lives and the child's life unworkable together. If there seems to be no real promise of change in the present situation, sometimes the child can best be helped by a different placement. Because you want the child to be helped, you will understand the need from removal.

In rare instances a child will be removed from a foster home because it has become apparent that the foster parents are not abiding by the rules and goals the agency established for foster care. In short, they are not a constructive or nurturing foster home at all, but quite the opposite. (In such cases more is involved, of course, than the simple termination of a placement.)

There are also the unfortunate circumstances that sometimes cause a foster parent to ask for a foster child's removal. There have been instances where a family finds that fostering isn't for them or that a particular placement isn't working—even after attempts to make it work. If you must request the removal of a child, **you must give your Case Manager a 30-day written notice.** They will work with the coordinator to place the child in a new home.

Preparation for Leaving

The Foster Child

Your foster child will need help in understanding the reason for the move as well as help in coping with the feelings about it. Feelings of rejection, of having failed in some way, or of not being lovable or worthy need to be brought out into the open and talked about. Try to give the child understandable explanations about why the move is occurring. Reassurance that the child is not being deserted also needs to be given. Explain that these plans were made with care and out of concern and regard for the child's well-being.

Even when a child is helped to an intellectual understanding of why the move is taking place, there may be feelings of anxiety like the ones suffered during a pre-placement visit. It will be helpful to the child to talk about these feelings openly and to share your own feelings about the move.

The Case Manager will also be active in helping the child with the adjustment. In cases where the child is returning to the family, it is helpful for the child to make a series of visits before the move takes place.

It is vital for the child's adjustment to moving that helpful information is shared about what to expect when going on to a new home. If the child is going back to the family, it is important for the child to understand the family's feelings about the return—they could be both happy and nervous about it. Remember that we all fear the unknown. The more the child can know about the coming situation, the better for the child's peace of mind.

Often it is important to the child to know that contact with you and you family will not cease abruptly. In most instances, there can be contact by letters, phone calls, or visits. Talk to your Case Manager about the possibility for future contact so you know whether you may feel free to reassure your child in this way.

All of the child's clothing, gifts, and personal belongings must be sent with the child. *This includes the child's records folder with Information for Foster Parents packet, Immunizations Records, School Records, and the Checklist.*

Foster parents are encouraged to use the "Change of Placement Checklist" on page 32 to ensure that foster children leaving your home do not leave any personal property behind. Copies of the checklist will be in your foster child's information when originally placed.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 42, for further information about when your child leaves.

You and Your Family

As a foster parent it is natural to have feelings about separation from a foster child when the child leaves your home. Sometimes feelings of loss can be mixed with feelings of relief or even feelings of failure. Be open with your Case Manager about your feelings. The Case Manager can be a support to you when discerning these feelings and dealing with them.

In order to talk with the child and other family members about the change of placement, you will need to have a good understanding of the need for the move. Your own children will need to have time to prepare themselves for the loss of the foster child and to develop an understanding of the reasons for the child's departure.

Give your children a chance to talk about their feelings. They may need some help in understanding them too. It would not be unusual for your child(ren) to feel guilt if there were hidden feelings of wanting the foster child gone. Sometimes it is helpful to visit the foster child in his/her new surroundings. This may help you and your child(ren) to relieve feelings of anxiety about the child, particularly when they have become close to your family.

It is helpful if, right from the start, your children, the foster child, and you have an understanding that the foster home placement is working toward reunification. While your home is a home for the child, it is in most cases a temporary home until things are better for the family or until such a time as the child and an adoptive home are ready for each other (if that is the plan). You, as the foster parent, must be the first to realize and remember that the child's stay in your home is most likely temporary, although the child's place in your heart may not be.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter One, page 17, for further information about you and your family.

Change of Placement Checklist

Foster children leaving your foster home should, at a minimum, leave your home with the following items and information. Use of this form is highly recommended, but not mandatory.

- ❖ Coat and/or Jacket
- ❖ Socks and undergarments
- ❖ Clean clothing for the next day
- ❖ All of the child's clothing purchased during his/her placement in your home
- ❖ An at least 2-day supply of formula and diapers
- ❖ Toothbrush
- ❖ Hairbrush/comb
- ❖ Any hygiene products the child used (e.g., deodorant, mouthwash, etc.)
- ❖ All personal property that accompanied the child when originally placed in your home.
- ❖ All toys, books, and other property purchased or given specifically for the child.
- ❖ All medication the child is currently taking, either in the original prescription or over the counter containers.
- ❖ School supplies, backpack, and all other school items.
- ❖ Child's records folder with Information for Foster Parents packet, Immunizations Records, School Records, and this Checklist.

Please fill in the following information, if applicable.

Child's School: _____

Child's Teacher's Name: _____

Child's Pediatrician: _____

Brand of Formula: _____

Clothing Size: _____

List of Medications and dose schedule: _____

Upcoming Mental Health/Medical Appointments: _____

Therapist's Name/Phone Number/Address: _____

Psychiatrist's Name/Phone Number/Address: _____

Other Pertinent Information: _____

Giving Notice

The Foster Family Responsibility

In situations where you wish to ask for the removal of a child, State law requires that you give a 30-day notice in writing. This is very important so that a new plan can be made for the child before the removal takes place. You will want to help with these preparations. You and your Case Manager will be working together to see that the removal deals fairly with the child's need for preparation, as well as your own.

The Agency Responsibility

In most cases, you and your Case Manager will be working together toward whatever plan seems the best for the child's future. The timing of the child's departure will depend upon what both of you see as being the best for all concerned.

If the agency must plan for the removal of a child against the wishes of the foster family, it is required by law to give a 30-day written notice prior to removing the child. This is true where the child has been in your home for at least six months. This requirement doesn't apply in the case of an emergency removal, where there is evidence of child abuse or neglect or other safety concerns. It also does not apply when the child's behavior poses the possibility of physical danger to self or others.

Foster Parent Training

Racine County Human Services has contracted with SaintA to provide initial foster parent training (Foundations) to all new applicants entering the program. In addition, post-licensing training is offered throughout the year on a variety of different topics. The training program provides a full range of courses on all aspects of foster parenting. Attending the training is crucial to a foster parent's success in the program.

St. Aemilian-Lakeside, Inc. will keep foster parents and foster care applicants' training records on file. In addition, training progress notifications will be sent to the foster parents three times a year, as a reminder for re-licensing. A calendar of new training sessions will be mailed out regularly.

You can sign up for any of the training sessions offered by calling the Training Coordinator at 638-6574. All training sessions are free.

Goals of Foundations Training (Pre-License)

- To prepare prospective foster parents, based on realistic criteria, regarding what they can expect from the foster parenting experience.
- Establish a clear understanding of the commonalities and differences between fostering, adopting, and providing kinship care services.
- Promote team-building between foster parents, birth parent(s), adoptive parents, agency staff, and community resources.
- Assure safety and improve the quality of care provided to children who live in foster homes.
- Reduce the number of moves for children in foster care and adoption.
- Initiate and promote the establishment of a support system for parents/ caregivers within the foster care system.
- Promote child advocacy and develop more advocates for children.

Pre-License Foster/Treatment Foster Parent Requirements

- All new applicants for a foster home license must complete the 6-hour pre-placement and 30 hours of Foundations training before they are eligible for a foster placement.
- Placement before training may be allowed for applicants receiving a special foster home license for a specific child or children.
- All licensed foster parents are required to complete the Foundations training.

Regular Foster Parent Requirements

To become a foster parent:

In Racine County the following training must be completed before licensure occurs.

1. Complete 6 hour pre-placement training
2. Participate in and complete 30 hours of foster parent Foundations training

Note: Foster parents who have been licensed prior to Foundations classes would have taken the 36 hour PACE curriculum. The State now defines training by individuals on the foster care license and it is not by household. If someone on the license has not completed PACE or Foundations training, the expectation is that they complete this training by January 1, 2015. If you are a foster parent that now has to take Foundations training, these training hours can be included toward your total re-licensing hours.

DCF 56.14 7C states, "A foster parent who operates a Level 2 foster home license before January 1, 2011, shall complete the initial licensing training before January 1, 2015, except as provided under par. (d)."

DCF 56.14 7D states, "A foster parent who operates a Level 2 foster home license that is licensed before January 1, 2011, and who provides verification to the licensing agency that he or she successfully completed a competency-based pre-service foster parent training as described in the department's DCFS Memo Series 2002-12 is not required to comply with par. (c). (Acceptable competency based, pre-service foster parent training includes the Partners in Alternative Care Education (PACE) curriculum)."

Ongoing Training Expectations:

All foster parents are required to participate in ongoing training. The type of license you have determines the amount of training required.

Kinship Homes (Level 1)

Those having a kinship home must complete a 6-hour kinship training within 6 months of placement of your family member.

Generally Licensed Foster Homes (Level 2)

1. Each person licensed is responsible to complete 20 hours of training within their licensing cycle. The foster parent licensing cycle is from the beginning and ending date on your license. For example, if you are licensed on 4/1/13 your license will expire 3/31/15. The license is for 2 years. It used to be acceptable to have 20 hours of training completed in a short period of time within the 2-year licensing period. This has changed and is defined in #2.
2. The 20 hours needed for each licensing cycle is broken down to foster parents needing to complete 10 hours of training each licensing year. For example, if you are licensed on 4/1/13 you will need to complete 10 training hours by 3/31/14 and another 10 hours by 3/31/15 for a total of 20 hours.

Treatment Foster Homes (Level 3)

1. Each person licensed is responsible to complete 36 hours of training within their licensing cycle. The foster parent licensing cycle is from the beginning and ending date on your license. For example, if you are licensed on 4/1/13 your license will expire 3/31/15. The license is for 2 years. It used to be acceptable to have 36 hours of training completed in a short period of time within the 2 year licensing period. This has changed and is defined in #2.
2. The 36 total hours needed for each licensing cycle is broken down to foster parents needing to complete 18 hours of training each licensing year. For example, if you are licensed on 4/1/13 you will need to complete 18 training hours by 3/31/14 and another 18 hours by 3/31/15 for a total of 36 hours.

Training Criteria:

There have been many questions about what counts as training. Below are the statutes describing training content.

(1) The content of the training shall meet at least one of the purposes of foster parent training:

- Improve the quality of care provided to children who live in foster or adoptive homes.
- DCF 56.14(1)(b) Prepare foster and adoptive families to care for and provide stability for foster children in their homes.
- DCF 56.14(1)(c) Promote communication, respect, and understanding among all involved parties, with a focus on working for the best interests of the foster child.
- Provide opportunities to foster parents to mutually explore their values, strengths, limitations, and needs as they relate to compatibility with foster and adoptive children.
- DCF 56.14(1)(e) Develop an understanding of the child welfare system and the importance of permanency for children.
- DCF 56.14(1)(f) Encourage foster and adoptive parent networking and the use of resources.

(2) Only 20% of the required hours can be completed using non-interactive resources.

If you are a Level 2 foster home 20% is 4 training hours per licensing cycle.
If you are a Level 3 foster home 20% is 7 training hours per licensing cycle.

Non-interactive training is training that does not have 1:1 or group interaction on a training subject. Books, movies, and recorded trainings are all examples of non-interactive training. We will offer movies we show for elective training that offers discussion after the training to make it interactive as well offering options like our Book Club. *This newsletter is including an article and questionnaire that can be completed and count toward 1 non interactive training credit.*

We try to be very flexible in what counts for training hours. We understand everyone has very busy schedules. Here are some things that foster parents have commented they find helpful for training:

1. There is a one-evening training session offered every month for foster parents. We try to rotate the day as many of parents may have after-school activities on Tuesdays and Thursdays while others often have church services on Wednesday evenings. We will also, beginning in April, do some Saturday trainings to see if this works for families, too. There have been requests from those who struggle with finding time during the week. Over the summer months we try to arrange live webinars so training can be accessed from home.
2. Foster parents have contacted us and created their own support / training groups for their area. They talk with our trainers to get approval for training subjects and timeframes before completing the training to ensure it will count.
3. A lot of foster parents make training plans with the foster care trainers so they can be sure to get the hours they need and focus the training in areas of their interest.
4. Utilize external training resources through the hospital, Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, local family resources, Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, and Southern Training Partnership. If you see something you are interested in learning about and would like to be sure it counts for training, please feel free to contact us.
5. Webinars offered through various training partnerships (listed above). This makes it convenient to complete training from home. Note: Webinars must be live to count for interactive training hours.
6. Caregiver Support Group is offered throughout the year for foster parents to come and discuss questions they have about fostering and to receive feedback from other foster parents. This does count as interactive training hours and is offered at least once every other month.
7. Many foster parents are involved in their church or other organizations through their employer. We often receive calls asking if certain events or seminars through one's church or work can count toward training. Please call us if you believe some of these meetings can count for training. For example, a foster father participated in a seminar through his church about fatherhood and parenting. He was able to get give us information regarding the seminar curriculum as well as give documentation of his attendance. He was able to get several of his seminar hours included for training. Another example is a foster mother who participated in a club where they had a keynote speaker come and talk about children with ADHD which counted toward her training hours. We've had many foster parents get training through a hospital where they will provide training on how to use an EPI pen or other important topics so that a specific child can be released in their care. These valuable times of training can be counted toward training hours.

8. If you are taking college classes, some college course hours can be used for training time. For example, a 3 credit semester course could give you 5 training hours. Classes such as Childhood Development, Psychology, or Human Services have been able to count towards total training hours.

Please remember that for training hours completed outside of what is offered through RCHSD, you will need to turn in a completed training certificate with your name and facilitator's name listed to our trainers. If a training session does not provide a certificate, some form of proof of the training attended will need to be provided for training credit. Please contact our trainers for any questions on how to track hours to be sure you receive all due credit.

Flyers are sent out every few months for training. If you want to register for a training session, please contact Rebecca Watkins at 262/638-6574 or email her at the following address: Rebecca.Watkins@goracine.org. Registration is important. If there is a lack of registered attendees or a snowstorm, we need to be able to contact you. Sometimes there is a limit of how many people can attend a particular training session. There might be limited supplies or expectations from external training partners. We do not want to turn anyone away!

Financial Information

Each foster parent will receive a monthly maintenance payment to cover the cost of caring for the foster child in the home. This rate is established uniformly across the State of Wisconsin and is based upon the age of the child in care. The basic rate is intended to cover the expenses of food, clothing, housing, personal care, and other expenses (including school supplies and recreation). Many foster parents also provide a personal allowance to the child to help the child learn the skills of money management and budgeting. Information on current maintenance rates is available from your Case Manager.

When a child is first placed in foster care, the need for clothing may be severe. To build up the child's wardrobe, an **initial clothing allowance** may be available. Again, the amount of the allowance is based upon the age of the child. You will be allowed to spend whatever portion of the initial clothing allowance that is needed and appropriate. After the initial clothing allowance has been used, the child's ongoing clothing expenses are covered by the basic monthly rate. Check with your Case Manager about the amount of the initial clothing allowance available for your foster child.

Foster children are eligible for the free lunch program at school. A form regarding this program can be obtained from the school office. Within the Racine Unified School District, book rental is waived for foster children. This form may also be obtained from the school office. This policy may vary at county schools.

Payments made to you as reimbursement for expenses of caring for a foster child are not taxable. You may not be required to report either expenditures or reimbursements for the care you provide. If you have further questions, please contact your local Internal Revenue Service office or your tax consultant.

The State of Wisconsin has an insurance program to cover the cost of damages (either by accident or on purpose) done in your home by your foster child. The insurance program is a "last resort" and will cover damages that would not be covered by your homeowner's or automobile insurance.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter One, page 11, for further information about foster planning and permanency planning.

Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities

AS A FOSTER PARENT, YOU HAVE A NUMBER OF “RIGHTS.” THESE INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO:

1. Receive a foster home license if you fully satisfy all of the requirements.
2. Be treated with respect by agency staff.
3. Receive pertinent information about prospective foster placements.
4. Protect your family.
5. Advocate on behalf of your foster child.
6. Refuse to accept a child.
7. Request the removal of a foster child, under extreme circumstances, giving 30 days of advance notice, when possible.

AS A FOSTER PARENT, YOU ALSO HAVE A NUMBER OF “RESPONSIBILITIES.” THESE INCLUDE:

1. Understanding the requirements of foster parents as set forth in the Wisconsin Administrative Code DCF-56, “Foster Home Care for Children,” and complying with them. Some of the important requirements are as follows:
 - a. Having an initial “physical exam.”
 - b. Complying with rules regarding “sleeping arrangements.”
 - c. Securing agency approval if the foster parent wishes to provide “child care” (babysitting) in the home or be regularly “employed outside the home.”
 - d. Using “reasonable” discipline which is appropriate to the child’s age and understanding, not including physical discipline.
 - e. Caring for “not more than two infants at any time.”
 - f. Accepting children only in “conformity with the conditions of your license” (number, age, sex).
 - g. Consulting with the agency regarding “major decisions affecting children in your care.”
 - h. Notify the agency of “emergencies involving the foster children in your care.

- i. Securing “agency permission” to leave the child in someone else’s care for more than 24 hours or take the child on vacation, out of state or within the state.
 - j. Cooperate with “reasonable visitation” plans.
 - k. Keeping information about the foster child “confidential.”
 - l. Maintaining “appropriate records.”
2. “Accepting children” only through the licensing agency. If you would consider a child through another agency, you must notify the Foster Care Coordinator immediately.
 3. Allowing “agency representatives to visit” at reasonable times.
 4. “Reporting promptly” to the agency “any change” of marital status, address, phone number, household composition, employment, health of family members, or any other factor that might affect the care of the foster child.
 5. Providing for the “day to day care” of your foster child. This includes:
 - a. Seeing that the child has nutritious meals, sufficient rest, suitable clothing, and necessary medical and dental care.
 - b. Seeing that the child receives a good education by monitoring attendance, encouraging participation, and having conferences with teachers, if requested.
 - c. Helping the child develop a well-rounded personality through participation in sports, crafts, and age-appropriate social activities.
 - d. Setting reasonable, consistent rules (agency consultation is suggested).
 - e. Teaching the child, through example and assignment, to perform routine household chores and handle money responsibly (appropriate to his age).
 - f. Providing discipline in a way that allows the child to learn respect of other people and property, to anticipate the consequences of his actions, and to grow in self-control.
 - g. Helping the child to see himself as a unique and valued person.

Please continue reading the *State of Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, page 26, for further information about foster parent responsibilities regarding the process of removal.

What Foster Parents May Authorize

Foster parents do not have the authority of a legal guardian, but due to the numerous times that approval and authorization may be necessary during the stay of a foster child, our Corporation Counsel and Administration has granted a certain "authority" to foster parents. The following is a list of circumstances in which you may approve and/or authorize:

1. Routine checkups (both well and sick) by a physician or nurse practitioner.
2. Immunizations - When a child has already started an immunization regimen, foster parents may authorize continued immunizations as a part of the routine check-. However, the initial decision to begin immunizations requires parental authorization.
3. School, sports, or extracurricular-related field trips. Any out-of-State school-related trips must be approved by parental consent.
4. Supervised sleepovers - Always make contact with the party in charge of the sleepover, having the phone number, and giving them yours. This situation also requires Case Manager consent as well as criminal background checks.

Always remember, when in doubt, contact the Department. Each instance should be looked at individually.

Concerning the above circumstances, when a signature is required, sign your name and cross out "Parent or Legal Guardian." Write in "Foster Parent."

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Three, page 32, for further information about making after-hours, weekend, or holiday reports.

Reimbursement for Damage Claims

Unfortunately, there have been occurrences when there has been damage done to a foster parent's property by a foster child. This can be an extremely stressful time for the family and needs to be reported immediately to your Case Manager. The agency does not have monies available to reimburse the foster parents for intentional damage, although damages can be recovered through the Wisconsin Foster Parent Insurance and Liability Program (\$200 deductible). The following steps are strongly suggested when intentional damage does occur and the foster parent is seeking reimbursement:

1. The foster parent shall press charges, especially when there is serious damage and intent. The matter will then be referred to the District Attorney's Office. Please let the Case Manager know that you are asking for restitution.
2. A report must also be made to the Foster Care Unit. A *DSC-116* form will be sent to you, which will need to be completed. The *DSC-116* form will be requested and will be submitted to Madison. Claims are reviewed by the State quarterly; reimbursement is made directly to you.

Although it is not frequent, it is possible that a foster child may damage or steal articles of value from their foster parents. Common sense should be exercised in displaying valuable and/or sentimental items or letting foster children know where they are kept.

Refer to the Liability Insurance Program brochure in the front of the blue binder.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, page 27, for further information about the Foster Parent Insurance Program.

Neglect/Abuse Investigation - When Foster Parents are Involved

There have been occurrences when allegations of abuse and/or neglect have been made against foster parents. In order to assess the safety of the child and determine whether or not that child should remain in the home, the following guidelines have been developed.

1. The CPS (Child Protective Services) Investigative Unit Supervisor reviews the allegations and determines whether the report meets the guidelines for an investigation. If it does, then an Investigator is then assigned.
2. The CPS Investigator, along with the Ongoing Case Manager, reviews the allegations and interviews the child/children involved. If the allegation comes in after hours, the Crisis Worker will determine the safety of the child.
3. The CPS Investigator, CPS Supervisor, and Case Manager decide:
 - a. If there is reason to believe the allegations;
 - b. Safety of the child;
 - c. Course of action

The foster parents are contacted by this agency and informed of the allegation, the course of action for the children in their home, and the process of the investigation. If it is believed that the allegations may be true, the Investigator makes a decision as to whether the children can safely remain in the home. When that decision is made and the children are moved, the case is then transferred to another county for a complete independent investigation.

If the Investigator, at the first stages of the investigation, finds that the allegation is untrue, the investigation will stop and the license and placement remains unchanged. Another county will still review the Investigator's decision before the case can be closed. If the allegations were of alleged sexual abuse, the child concerned in the allegation and perhaps the other children will be removed. Sexual abuse, whether real or imagined, will raise emotions to the point where relationships are damaged. The agency Case Manager will discuss with the foster parents if there should be a modification of the number and type of children placed in their home in the future.

After investigation or review by the outside county, their findings will be discussed with the foster family.

If the allegations are unsubstantiated, but there are other concerns noted by the Investigator or Case Manager, a Licensing Violation Report will be completed and submitted.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, page 18, for further information about allegations of abuse and neglect.

Licensing Violations Within the Foster Home

In instances where abuse or neglect allegations or other concerns are reported to the County and the allegations do not rise to the level of a CPS investigation, a Licensing Violation is completed by the Ongoing Case Manager or Investigator. The following guidelines have been developed by our agency:

1. The Case Manager and their Supervisor review the alleged license violation with the Foster Care Supervisor or Coordinator and make a decision regarding child safety.
2. The Case Manager, Supervisor, and Foster Care Supervisor decide:
 - a. If there is reason to believe the allegation;
 - b. Safety of the child;
 - c. Course of action

If there are safety concerns, the Case Manager or Investigator will notify the foster parents that there has been an alleged violation of the foster home rules and will inform the foster parents if children need to be removed.

A Foster Care Worker will conduct interviews, as necessary, and discuss the allegations with the foster parents. The information gathered will be staffed with the Foster Care Coordinator. Decisions on licensing can range from requiring additional training, amending licenses as to the type and number of children that can be placed, or license revocation. All findings will be made in writing and reviewed with the foster parents.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, page 23, for further information (“Licensing Concerns: How They Are Typically Handled”).

Revocation and Appeal of Foster Home License

There are times when it becomes necessary to revoke a foster parent's license. A foster home license may be revoked due to violations of the Wisconsin Administrative Code for Foster Homes - DCF 56 and Chapter 48 of the Children's Code. We have, therefore, established the guidelines listed below when a foster home license is revoked.

1. If a foster home license revocation is done, a letter stating the reasons as well as an explanation of the Fair Hearing process will be sent to the foster parent.
2. The foster parent may appeal the decision to revoke the license.
3. A hearing will be scheduled for the appeal.
4. A judge will decide to uphold the revocation or grant the appeal.

HFS 56.10 Hearing

- (1) **APPEAL.** An applicant for a license to operate a foster home who is denied a license or a licensee whose license is revoked or whose application for renewal of the license is denied may appeal the decision by asking for a hearing in accordance with ch. 227, Stats.

Note: The appeal rights described in this section relate only to licensure decisions. Foster parents also have appeal rights for non-licensure decisions as provided under s. 48.64 (4) Stats., and ch. HA 3 rules. Any decision made by a circuit court regarding a placement or a placed child is not appealable by the foster parent under this section.

- (2) **REQUEST FOR A HEARING.** A request for a hearing shall be in writing and shall be addressed to the department of administration's division of hearings and appeals. The date of the request for a hearing shall be the date on which the request is received by that office. Any request for a hearing shall be received no more than 15 days after the date of the notice of the agency decision to deny, revoke, or not renew the license.

Note: The request for a hearing should be sent to:

Division of Hearings and Appeals
P. O. Box 7875
Madison, WI 53707

or delivered to the Division at:

5005 University Avenue, Suite 201
Madison, WI 53705-5400

- (3) **ARRANGEMENTS FOR A HEARING.** In response to a request for a hearing under this section, the division of hearings and appeals shall appoint a hearing examiner, set a date for the hearing, and notify the parties in writing at least 10 days before the hearing of the date, time, and place of the hearing and of the procedures to be followed.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Two, pages 24-25, for further information about other concerns that may be raised.

Complaint/Grievance Procedure

The Racine County Human Services Department has established a complaint procedure to be used by individuals receiving services through this agency. This procedure does not supersede the statutorily-mandated appeal processes for the Kinship Care Program, maltreater substantiation decisions, COP/CIP decisions, or *foster home denials or revocations (see page 48)*. Where those statutory appeals procedures exist, consumers will be given a written notice of their rights.

Any consumer who is dissatisfied with the way in which a case is being managed or with a decision(s) made, should first attempt to resolve his/her concerns with the Case Manager or investigator involved.

STEP ONE: If the consumer and Case Manager cannot resolve the issue, the Case Manager or investigator will forward the complaint to his/her supervisor. The consumer may also call the supervisor directly. The supervisor's name and phone number can be obtained from the Case Manager/investigator or by calling Youth and Family Access at 638-7720. The supervisor will attempt to resolve the consumer's concerns. If appropriate, the supervisor may obtain the reasoning behind the agency's actions or take other actions to settle the issue. The supervisor will have 5 working days from receiving notice of the complaint to respond to the complaint.

STEP TWO: If, after review by the supervisor, the consumer is still not satisfied with the agency's action, he/she may initiate a formal complaint process by submitting a written request for review of the complaint to the **Division Manager**. This request must be received by the Division Manager within 5 working days of the supervisor's response. The complaint should be sent to:

Manager of (Youth or Adult) Services
1717 Taylor Avenue
Racine, WI 53403

Upon receipt of the written complaint, the Manager will gather information pertaining to the issue and attempt to resolve the consumer's concerns. Further explanation of the agency's role or limitations may be provided to the consumer or additional actions will be taken to settle the complaint. Complaints will receive a written response within 7 working days of receipt of the complaint.

STEP THREE: If the issue has still not been resolved to the consumer's satisfaction within 5 working days of receiving the Manager's response, the consumer may request that the complaint be referred to the Human Services Director. The Manager will send the complaint to the Director immediately upon receiving such a request.

STEP FOUR: The Racine County Human Services Director shall respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. The decision made by the Human Services Director will be final, unless you are appealing a decision made regarding your foster home license denial or revocation.

Respite

Treatment and Regular licensed foster parents are eligible to receive 14 days of respite a year. **This means 14 total days and is not per child.** Respite care is when the child is placed in an alternative placement overnight while the foster parent goes on a vacation, takes care of a family emergency, or is in need of a break. The foster parent can use the entire 14 days of respite at one time or they can break the time up over the course of the year.

A foster parent can request respite by calling the foster care program at 638-6356 or 638-6595 with the children's information and the specific dates when respite is needed. Foster Care Workers will attempt to locate another licensed foster home to provide the respite. The Foster Care Worker will then contact the foster parent needing respite and give the respite provider's information. It is the responsibility of the foster parent at this time to coordinate with the respite provider regarding the time of drop-off and pick-up as well as any special instructions or appointments the child has. **Foster parents are strongly encouraged to fill out the *Respite Care Information* form, within this binder, for the child's respite provider.** It is the foster parents' responsibility to provide the respite provided all of the children's necessary information.

The foster care program asks that respite requests be given *at last 10 days in advance* to ensure a respite home can be located. However, even respite requests given with one day's notice will be honored and an attempt to find a respite home will be made. Due to many reasons, it is often difficult to locate a respite provider for a child. For this reason, respite requests given on short notice cannot be sure that respite can be coordinated.

Treatment and Regular foster parents may allow an unlicensed person to provide respite for their foster child; however, this person must pass a background check in order to be approved by the foster care staff prior to the respite.

Approving Unlicensed Providers for Respite

Foster parents should allow the foster care staff at least 10 days to approve an unlicensed provider. Foster parents can call the foster care staff with the person's name, phone number, and address. A *Background Disclosure* form would then be sent to this person to fill out and return. A safety check of the person's home will also be done if they are providing care in their home and they will be asked to sign a *Respite Agreement*. When record checks and the safety check are completed, the foster parent would be informed that the person was either approved or denied to provide the respite. The foster parent must always report to the child's Case Manager AND the foster care staff the dates the child will be in respite.

Respite and Substitute Care Policy - Treatment and Regular Foster Care

RESPITE CARE: A period of time that includes at least one overnight. A respite care provider is paid through the Human Services Department. Respite providers must be approved by HSD and meet the requirements of DCF 56.06. Respite care can be provided in the foster home or the respite provider's home.

SUBSTITUTE CARE: A period of time less than an overnight. Substitute care providers must be approved by HSD. The substitute care can be provided in the foster home or the provider's home. Substitute care providers do not receive payment through the Human Services Department.

RESPITE PAYMENT: Respite payments to respite care providers are the daily rate of the child's foster care reimbursement rate. Racine County Human Services Department will pay up to 14 days (per foster family) of respite per year.

APPROVALS: All persons identified as substitute care providers shall pass a caregiver record check.

The following approvals are made for respite providers:

- When respite will be provided by an unlicensed provider in a licensed foster home, a caregiver check and signed respite provider agreement is needed for approval.
- When an unlicensed person in an unlicensed home will provide the respite, a safety check of the home using the DCF foster home standards must be completed as well a caregiver check on all members of the household age 10 and over. All unlicensed individuals planning to provide care during the respite period must sign a respite provider agreement.
- Licensed foster homes with sufficient space for additional children meet the criteria for providing respite. The Case Manager, however, must approve the plan.
- A certified or licensed daycare provider can submit a copy of their daycare license in place of a caregiver check being done.

Respite Payment

Respite providers are reimbursed by the foster care daily rate. The formula to figure out the child's daily rate is: the child's monthly foster care rate divided by the number of days in the month and multiplied by the number of nights respite care was provided. Respite is paid according to the number of nights overnight care is provided.

The reimbursement will be mailed to the respite provider after the respite has been provided.

Respite payments are considered taxable income for licensed and unlicensed providers if over \$600 a year. A W-9 will be provided if this occurs.

Please continue reading the State of Wisconsin *Foster Parent Handbook*, Chapter Five, page 9, for further information about respite.

Respite Care Information Form

FOSTER CHILD INFORMATION

Name of Child: _____ Current Age: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Case Manager's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Current School: _____ Grade: _____ Room: _____

School Address: _____ School Phone: _____

Teacher: _____ Bus Schedule: _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Doctor's Name: _____ Doctor's Phone: _____

Doctor's Address: _____

Medical Card Number: _____

Current Medications: _____

FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION

Name of Foster Parents: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Contact Number: _____

DURATION OF RESPITE CARE AGREEMENT

Date Respite Begins: _____ Date to End: _____

Provision for Transporting To and From Respite Care Provider: _____

In case of an emergency, please call Information and Assistance at 262/638-7720.