



BILATERAL SERVICE AGREEMENT

Purpose:

The purpose of this Agreement is to identify the expectations for both foster parents and the Department of Children and Families on behalf of the children and families that are served in the foster care program. [NOTE: For this agreement, Department means Family Safety staff, Lead Agency Staff, Contract Case Management staff or Contract Licensing staff.] This agreement reflects standards of care that are current requirements in Florida Administrative Code, which are based on statutory authority found in section 409.175, Florida Statutes. The premise of this agreement is that the department and foster parents must work as partners to assure safety, to provide for the physical and mental well being and to obtain permanency for each child.

Department Responsibilities to foster parents include:

- a. To treat foster parents with courtesy, respect and as an important team member.
- b. To show support by responding within 24 hours to telephone messages and written correspondence.
- c. To the fullest extent possible, to schedule all meetings with the foster parents at mutually convenient times.
- d. To provide or arrange for training opportunities that are offered at a time and location that are as convenient as possible for foster parents.
- e. To meet, address and resolve complaints regarding foster parents or disputes between the foster parents and the department, if necessary.
- f. To notify foster parents within 2 working days when a new Family Services counselor is assigned to children in their home. To provide the new counselor's name, work phone number, an after-hours phone number and the counselor's supervisor's name and telephone number.
- g. To provide at least once a year, performance feedback through the use of the Family Services Counselor's Review of Foster Parent(s) Performance form, CF-FSP 5223 and The Quality of Foster Care Home: Community Input form, CF-FSP 5225. The Child exit interviews completed during the year will be included as part of the performance review.
- h. To discuss prior to placement of a child, the information in the Child Service Agreement, and upon placement to provide a copy of the Child Service Agreement.
- i. To provide the child's Resource Record to the foster parents no later than 72 hours after placement. To provide updated information to the foster parent in a timely manner.
- j. To provide the case plan, which is a record of services to for the child and family, within 72 hours of placement of the child or within 24 hours of acceptance of the case plan by the court.
- k. To provide a board payment for each child placed in the home based on the established rate structure. Payments will be made each month in a prompt fashion.
District/Region anticipated payment date: _____
- l. To provide each year, a clothing payment based on the established rate for new clothing and shoes for the child.
- m. To provide the foster parents a minimum of one face to face visit every calendar month by the child's Family Services counselor when there is a foster child in the home. This visit must take place in the foster parents' home. The visits may need to take place more frequently if the foster parents and/or child are experiencing difficulties.

- n. To provide the foster parents who are caring for a child on shelter status a minimum of one home visit per calendar week by the counselor.
- o. To ask for the opinions and ideas of the foster parents when preparing updated case plans, during monthly visits to the home, case plan meetings, departmental staffings, court hearings and any other forum in which the foster child is discussed.
- p. To provide notice of all court hearings and departmental staffings, pertaining to children in their care, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting or hearing.
- q. If available, respite care will be provided by the department with a 30-day notice when either the foster parents or the department requests such service. Emergency respite care shall be provided by the department when requested by the foster parent(s).

Foster Parent Responsibilities to the child include:

- a. To make a commitment to work with the child for the length of time necessary before the child goes to a permanent home.
- b. To provide acceptance and care to the child by praising the child often, showing appropriate emotional responses, listening to the child's feelings and asking for the child's opinions.
- c. To treat the child as if the child is their own. The child must receive the same food as the rest of the family, should be taken on family outings, and vacations and should be shown the same amount of time, interest, and patience the rest of the family receives.
- d. To ensure that the child has supervision appropriate to his/her age and/or developmental level.
- e. To assist in setting up visits with the child's parent(s) or relatives.
- f. To never make negative statements about a child's family.
- g. To work with the child, parents, department, and significant others to ensure that the child has a smooth transition when he/she returns to family or is placed in another permanent home or interim placement.
- h. To transport and accompany the child to medical, dental, mental health appointments and visits with parents and relatives.
- i. To provide the child his/her monthly spending allowance which is included in the board payment.
- j. To buy the child clothing and necessary toiletries with the monthly board rate and clothing allowance as referenced in the Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227.
- k. To keep an inventory of all belongings the child brought to the home as well as those purchased or subsequently obtained for the child. These belongings must go with the child when they leave the foster home.
- l. To support and encourage the religious beliefs, ethnic heritage and language of the child and the child's family. If the child wishes to attend cultural events or religious services, the foster parents will provide or arrange transportation.
- m. To adhere to the department's safety and discipline policies, see Attachment A. Failure to comply with the department's safety and discipline policies may result in the removal of children from the home.
- n. To give the child medication in the dosage and duration as prescribed by a doctor or psychiatrist and keep thorough documentation in the Child Resource Record.
- o. To enroll each school age child in school within three school days of child's placement in the home. To request assistance from the department if there are problems.
- p. To inform the school in writing that they (foster parents) wish to be notified and participate in Individual Education Plan meetings, school activities and conferences.

- q. To encourage and facilitate parental participation in school activities, including Individual Education Plan meetings, conferences, etc. (Unless parents' rights have been terminated, the parents have the right to give school-related consents.)
- r. To attend and take part in court hearings, and other staffings concerning the child and the child's family.
- s. To promote the following conditions for the child in the home:
 1. Opportunities and encouragement to communicate and have contact with family members, friends and other people important to the child. The only exception is when the court specifically bars contact with an individual.
 2. Respect for the child's body, person, possessions, bed and personal space.
 3. Encouragement and assistance in decorating his/her room with items that reflect the child's interests, heritage, culture, family and individual personality.
 4. Opportunities to develop interests and skills through participation in school and community activities, such as music, art, sports and special interest clubs.
 5. Encouragement and support in making new friends and maintaining past friends who have a positive relationship with the child.
 6. Encourage the child's sense of pride and accomplishment in his/her abilities when goals are achieved. Provide special recognition and praise when the child does something important for their progress and well being.
 7. Provide the child with suitable clothing, is appropriate for the weather, and appropriate for the age of the child. Whenever reasonable, the child's preferences in clothing should be considered.

Foster Parent Responsibilities to the department include:

- a. To treat department staff, the child's family, and Guardian ad Litem, etc. with respect and courtesy.
- b. To complete the Foster Parent's Review of Family Services Counselor Performance form, CF-FSP 5224 as requested for children who were in the home 30 days or more.
- c. To take part in at least eight hours of yearly in-service training approved by the department.
- d. To notify the department immediately of a potential change in address, living arrangements, marital status, family composition (who is in the home), employment, significant health changes or any other condition that may affect the child's well-being.
- e. To notify the department promptly of all contacts the family or any member of the home has with police or any law enforcement agencies.
- f. To take only the department's children into care and make no plans for allowing other children or adults to reside in the home, without prior approval is given by the department.
- g. To be available 24 hours per day seven days per week to receive children if the home is licensed as an emergency shelter home.
- h. To accept the direction and supervision given by department in caring for the child.
- i. To accept the board payment per month as shown in the Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227.
- j. To use the clothing allowance referred to in Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227, to buy the child clothes and shoes.
- k. To obtain authorization from the department prior to spending money if repayment is expected.
- l. To hold confidential all information about the child and the child's family and discuss the information only with a department staff member or a specialist (i.e., doctor, psychiatrist, therapist) working with the child.

- m. To keep the Child's Resource Record up-to-date (including the quarterly photograph of the child provided by the department).
- n. To allow the child to be removed from the foster home only by a department staff member, Guardian ad Litem, or another party granted permission by the department or the court. To verify the identify and authority of staff and other parties when not known to the foster parent.
- o. To obtain prior approval for the movement of the child to another home for the purpose of respite.
- p. To know where and with whom the child is staying and the type of supervision the child is receiving when foster parents approve an outing or overnight activity. Children may not remain in an unlicensed setting for any time other than a planned, supervised outing or overnight activity without the explicit approval of the department.
- q. To take the following actions if the child is missing or has runaway:
 - 1. Immediately notify law enforcement to report a missing child or run away
 - 2. Notify the department that the child is missing or runaway
 - 3. Check to see if any personal belongings are gone
 - 4. Write down what the child was last seen wearing, if the child has any identifying marks, if the child has any medical or physical conditions that require immediate attention
 - 5. Locate a recent photograph of the child
 - 6. Contact friends, teachers or employers to see if they have knowledge of where the child is
 - 7. Once a missing person report is taken the foster parent must record the case number, obtain a copy of the report (if available) and provide them to the department
- r. To notify the department immediately if the child needs medical attention for sickness, injuries or significant changes in the child's health.
- s. To immediately notify the department of any sexually inappropriate action or behavior by the foster child.
- t. To work with the department to meet the needs of the child by attending scheduled meetings to discuss the child and his/her family.
- u. To work with the department in planning for the child, which may include transfer to an adoptive placement or return to parent(s) or relative(s) or becoming an adoptive placement.
- v. To refrain from engaging in any legal action to acquire custody of the child without the department's consent. Adoption by a child's foster parents is often the best choice for finding a permanent home for a child when reunification is not an option. In these situations the foster parents and the department will work together to achieve this goal.
- w. To notify the department if any Family Services Counselor with a child in the home does not make a visit each calendar month. Notification should be made by calling 1 800 FLA-FIND.
(Note: The 1 800 FLA FIND number will not be active until September 1, 2002.)
- x. To not sign blank or incomplete visitation forms or to falsify any record on which the department relies. (Such action may result in the foster care license being revoked.)

The department may remove the child from the foster home at anytime but will, whenever possible, give a two-week notice. Foster parents may request the department to remove a child from the home, but will, whenever possible, give the department at least a two-week notice, except when the child poses a threat to himself, herself or others, or a crisis in the foster family compromises the foster care parents' ability to care for the child.

Non-compliance with any of the above provisions may result in administrative action by the Department which could include corrective action, suspension, revocation or denial of further licensure pursuant to Chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

I/we have read, understand and agree to abide by the terms of this agreement.

Foster Father's Signature

Date

Foster Mother's Signature

Date

Department Representative Signature

Date

Title



BILATERAL SERVICE AGREEMENT SIGNATURE PAGE

To Be Used at Each Relicensure

Foster Father's Signature

Date

Foster Mother's Signature

Date

Department Representative Signature

Date

Title

COMMENTS: