



children's home + aid

Foster Parent Mentoring Manual

*Experienced Foster Parents helping New Foster Parents Successfully Support Youth
in Care*

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Children's Home + Aid Mission

Children's Home + Aid partners with children, youth and families whose potential is at risk to create hope, opportunity, and bright futures.

Children's Home + Aid Vision

All children, youth and families thrive in strong communities.

Vision of Foster Parent Mentor Program

Children's Home + Aid (CH+A) recognizes the importance of supporting newly licensed foster parents. CH+A further recognizes the value of experienced Foster Parents. Experienced Foster Parents meeting established criteria will possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to teach newly licensed Foster Parents how to navigate the dependency system, how to access needed services for children placed in their homes and how to appropriately advocate for those children.

QPI Brand Statement- Northern Region

A foster family provides a loving, caring, patient, and understanding safe home for as long as the child needs. Foster families honor the children's relationship with their family however possible. They are committed to the holistic development of the child and forming supportive relationships that are intended to last a life time. Foster Parents are valued and respected, active partners in assisting the child to return home if possible or to achieving permanency in another way. Foster Parents are advocates for children in their care.



Overview of the Foster Parent Mentoring Program

The Foster Parent Mentor program will be utilized to;

- Increase the retention of current Foster Parents, to increase the recruitment of new quality Foster Parents and to guide Foster Parents into understanding the most successful way to excel within the child welfare system
- Give newly licensed Foster Parents the opportunity to benefit from hands-on training and support. Children's Home + Aid recognizes that experienced Foster Parents are one of the best resources to provide the support along with a system of care and community
- Provide the support needed to Foster parents to improve retention and placement disruptions
- Recognize that Foster Parents are already serving as informal mentors to each other throughout the state. CH +A would like to formalize these current relationships by adding training, criteria, recognition and travel reimbursement to these services.

Each newly licensed Foster Parent will be able to be paired with a trained mentor upon issuance of their license. The mentor and mentee will be matched based on similarities and location between both parties. Information about mentees and mentors will be collected to ensure that schedules and availability allow for the most impactful relationship. A mentor will be assigned to a mentee for 12 months of active Foster Parenting. The 12 month period will be considered active so long as a foster placement is in the home of the mentee. During the 12 month period the Mentor, will meet in person monthly with the mentee and have communication via phone, and email as needed. Assigned communication topics will be discussed to ensure the Mentee receives adequate knowledge in all of the required areas. If a mentee is showing competency in all areas a mentor may be removed at the 6 month mark from the program.

Expected outcomes

- Improve retention on licensed foster homes
- Improve placement stability
- Improve partnership in the system of care between workers, biological families, and foster families
- Increase the number of shared parenting opportunities
- Increase participation of Foster Parents in the Quality Parent Initiative, recruitment, Foster Parent advisory councils, trainings and area support groups
- Increased Foster Parent recruitment
- New Foster Parents are provided with a knowledge to anticipate the needs of the youth in care



Target Group

- Newly licensed Foster Parents with Children's Home + Aid
- Foster Parents that have expressed desire to receive more support
- Current Foster Parents recognized as requiring some additional assistance or support.

Qualities of a Foster Parent Mentor

- Committed to a positive approach
- Current or previous traditional or kinship foster parent
- Recommendation from current or previous licensing or case worker
- Open to partnering with biological and extended family, potential adoptive families and child welfare professionals to achieve permanency
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, experience with hardships and a good problem solver
- Evidence of understanding how to successfully navigate the child welfare system
- Semi-Flexible time schedule
- Valid driver's license
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Access to the internet and email

Role of the Foster Parent Support Specialist

The Foster Parent Support Specialist (FPSS) will receive a referral for a Mentor from the licensing department of the area's Children's Home + Aid. The FPSS will discuss the candidate with the worker and approach the Foster Parent on becoming a mentor. If the Foster Parent is interested the FPSS will conduct an interview before deciding if they are a good fit for the program. Once the FPSS has chosen a mentor they will be assigned to attend the next training series.

The Foster Parent Support Specialist will ensure that all new foster parents are paired with a trained mentor at the time of their first placement. The FPSS will also track all communications and hours spent mentoring throughout the month for each mentor and mentee. If a mentee or mentor is unhappy with their pairing, the FPSS will investigate the reason why and assign a new mentor to the home.

The Foster Parent Support Specialist will be available to answer questions from the mentors and find available resources when needs are identified.

Surveys will be conducted to ensure that the program continues to be helpful and beneficial to the new Foster Parents



It is the responsibility of the FPSS to ensure that each mentor is attending the required trainings and is up to date on all policy changes that affect Foster Parenting.

Role of the Agency

Children's Home + Aid will support the mentors by giving as much training opportunity and information as possible. In addition, the agency will ensure they are making recommendations for new mentors as needed and providing support for the mentors as needed. Children's Home + Aid will also assist in getting the information out to new Foster Parents about the mentoring program and notifying the FPSS when new Foster Parents have become licensed.

Role of the Mentor

- To provide guidance and support to new Foster Families including:
 - Contact upon license finalization
 - Contact upon placement of new child and assist with advocating for special needs and initial concerns
 - Assist in dealing with system barriers through guidance in navigating the system of care
 - Support with school system issues and court-related issues
 - Support through transition with grief and loss
 - Helping to understand the shared parenting rules and expectations
- To provide support for existing Foster Families in crisis, including situations such as disruptions, abuse investigations and personal family crisis
- To assist in recruitment of new Foster Parents by positive introduction to Foster Parenting and marketing of the QPI Brand
- To maintain and encourage absolute confidentiality in all information discussed with the mentee.
- To assist with ensuring that each new Foster Parent is equipped with all of the knowledge they will need to successfully navigate the foster care system independently
- Maintain a professional demeanor and follow all of CH+A procedures and policies

Duties:

- Mentor new foster family for minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months
 - Establish a personal, working relationship with Foster Parents
 - Physically meet with the Foster Parents in an agreed upon location at least once per month
 - Make phone/email contact as requested
 - Assist new Foster Parents in positively navigating the system of care
 - Review all of the required communication topics within the allotted time frame



- Be available 24/7 as applicable and reasonable
- Attend brief monthly meetings with the Foster Parent Support Specialist via phone or in person
 - Turn in completed reports and logs
 - Attend assigned trainings as needed

Role of the Mentee

- Be open to mentors advice and expertise
- Willingly share concerns and questions as they arise
- Provide feedback to the agency about the mentors and your experience
- Be willing to attend area support groups, trainings and Foster Parent enrichment events throughout the year if possible

Reporting and Reimbursement

Mentors must document all activities on the Mentor Activity Log and submit logs on the last day of the month to the Foster Parent Support Specialist via email. The Mentor will also complete a travel reimbursement log for each month. Travel outside of the home town will be reimbursed at a rate of \$0.535 per mile, and will be reimbursed within two weeks. In addition mentors will complete a visit case note for in person visits completed one time per month. This case note will highlight any areas that a Foster Parent has concerns in, any conversation topics that were discussed and reviewed, and any future training the mentor has recommended to the Foster Parent.

Additional reimbursement for time will be in the form of; access to increased training opportunity and information throughout the year with foster parent credit, appreciation events and recognition by the agency as a Rock Star Foster Parent!

Application Process

A Foster Parent will be identified by a licensing worker as a good candidate to become a mentor, at that time; they will be contacted by the Foster Parent Support Specialist.

The Foster Parent Support Specialist will explain the mentoring program to the Foster Parent and ask that they complete the application form. The Foster Parent Support Specialist will then ask the Foster Parent some questions to determine if they are a good fit for the mentoring program and ensure they embody all of the required qualifications as outlined in the manual.



After a Foster Parent is identified as a good candidate, they will be assigned a time to attend training.

Training Schedule and Curriculum

2 day- 7 hours of training to include:

1st day 3.5 hours

- Role, staying objective, review of issues requiring assistance
- Reports, logs and expectations of Mentor
- Boundaries and Confidentiality training
- Communication and Feedback, Conflict Resolution and Assessment
- Shared Parenting and the new expectations
- Child Welfare System, Courts, and Schools
- Resources
- DCFS 402 Standards
- PRIDE overview
- QPI overview

2nd day 3.5 hours

CH+A Trauma 101 (1.5 hours)

Case Work; understanding what the role of each professional is in the cases- Professional Panel (2 hours)

- Case Aid
- CASA (can speak on GAL)
- Caseworker
- Licensing Worker
- Adoption/permanency worker

Additional hours of in-service related to Mentoring Program will be completed once per quarter

Program Evaluation

Initial numbers will be collected to understand the current amounts of licensed homes, and to evaluate retention. Focus will be on evaluating recruitment of new homes, retention of current, and placement stability of youth in care. Surveys will be sent out to each Mentee home once per quarter to ensure they are continuing to find the Mentor Program beneficial and necessary with a final survey being sent out after the completion of a mentor "experience" to determine the overall effectiveness of the program and to make changes as appropriate for the enhancement of the program.



Safety Plan Monitor Mentor Program

In the event that a Safety Plan Monitor is identified, by the agency, as needing additional support, specially trained intact services Foster Parent Mentor will be assigned to provide additional support. The Safety Plan Monitor will be able to utilize the Mentor to assist in finding resources in the community and understanding the process to better assist in supporting the youth and family in success. The Mentor assigned to the Safety Plan Monitor will work with them utilizing the conversation topics that have an asterisk beside them. In addition community resource information will be available to the Mentor and updated regularly with new information by the Foster Parent Support Specialist.



Appendix A



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Foster Parent Mentor Qualifications and Description

Minimum Qualifications:

- Committed to a positive approach
- Current or previous traditional or kinship foster parent
- Recommendation from current or previous licensing or case worker
- Open to partnering with biological and extended family, potential adoptive families and child welfare professionals to achieve permanency
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, experience with hardships and a good problem solver
- Evidence of understanding how to successfully navigate the child welfare system
- Semi-Flexible time schedule
- Valid driver's license
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Access to the internet and email

Training:

- Initial 7 hour Foster Parent mentor training
- 1 additional Foster Parent mentor training per quarter

Duties:

- Be available to be assigned to new Foster Parents
- Establish a personal, working relationship with Foster Parents
- Meet with Foster Parents in person at least 1 time per month.
- Complete required reporting forms monthly and email to the Foster Parent Support Specialist
- Assist new Foster Parents in positively navigating the foster care system
- Mentor new foster families for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months
- Review all of the required conversations within the assigned time with the mentee



Appendix B



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Foster Parent Mentor Program-Mentor Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Licensing Worker: _____

1) What do you enjoy the most about being a Foster Parent?

2) How long have you been with Children's Home + Aid and have you been with any other agencies?

3) How much time do you have available that you could provide each month to mentor new Foster Parents and attend periodic trainings?

4) Why would you like to be a Foster Parent mentor? What skills do you have that will help you to be a good mentor for new Foster Parents?

5) Do you have a basic knowledge of the internet, e-mail, and navigating social media sites?



6) How long have you been a licensed Illinois Foster Parent?

7) What are some areas that frustrated you related to foster care?

8) What are some factors that have contributed to your success as a veteran Foster Parent? (Support, religion, trainings, etc.)

9) Shared Parenting is an important opportunity for support to be provided to new Foster Parents, what is your experience with shared parenting in the cases you have been involved with?

10) Describe your involvement if any in community or Foster Parent specific organizations or boards.

Signature

Date



Appendix E

Foster Parent Conversation Topics

1. What to expect when a child is placed in your home
 - a. Call Health works within 24 hours (Specific numbers listed in ORG by location)
 - b. Understanding what could happen in the first 24 hours
 - i. Lice/scabies *
 - ii. Sleeping difficulties*
 - iii. Various emotions (for everyone)*
 - iv. Communication difficulties *
 - v. Icebreaker/Bio Parent contact
 - vi. Unexpected behaviors*
 - c. Clothing and personal item inventory (requesting voucher if necessary)
 - d. Honeymoon period*
 - e. Hoarding*
 - f. Watching and Evaluating*
 - g. Schedule any necessary medical appointments; dental, vision, and medical
 - h. Visits begin
2. Understanding the documents you will receive
 - a. 906 form/Placement Authorization Form
 - b. Medical card
 - c. Health Passport
3. Understanding the Court process (FCH Section 2)
 - a. What is your role as the Foster Parent
 - b. Case Progression
 - c. Terms of abuse and neglect you may hear
 - d. Understanding the people you will meet in the court room and their roles in the case
 - i. GAL/CASA
 - ii. Public Defenders
 - iii. Judge
 - iv. States Attorney and DCFS Counsel
4. Members on Each child's team and their role (FCH Section 3)
 - a. Birth family
 - b. Case manager
 - c. Case manager's supervisor
 - d. Investigator (DCP)
 - e. GAL/CASA
 - f. Counselor
 - g. Case Aid



- h. You
5. Shared parenting expectations for Foster parents
 - a. Visits
 - b. Medical Appointments
 - c. Extracurricular Events
 6. Meetings to attend
 - a. Child Family Team Meetings (CFTM)
 - b. Annual Case Review (ACR) (FCH Section 3 Page 26)
 - c. Integrated Assessment
 - d. Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) (FCH Section 3 Page 29)
 7. Record Keeping
 - Although this is something that everyone does differently, sharing information on what works for you will help to ensure that the new Foster Parents understand some options for record keeping.
 - a. Receipts
 - b. Medical appointments past and future
 - c. Behaviors
 - d. School/daycare reports
 - e. Any concerns or questions regarding visits
 8. Consents: how to receive and use them
 - a. Surgical
 - b. Mental health
 - c. Psychotropic
 - d. Travel
 - e. Medical
 9. Education advocacy and understanding
 - a. 504 process
 - b. Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP)
 - c. Early Interventions and Head Start Programs
 - d. Education Expenses (FCH section 6 Page 20-23)
 - i. Food and Textbooks
 - ii. Summer school
 - iii. School Clothes and supplies
 - iv. Tutoring
 - e. Transportation
 10. Goals (FCH Section 7)
 - a. Return home
 - b. Adoption
 - c. Guardianship



- d. Independence
- 11. 402 Licensing standards (Copy of procedure found in ORG)
- 12. Caregivers' Rights and Responsibilities (FCH Section 8)
 - a. Agency Implementation Plan (Found in ORG)
- 13. Reimbursement
 - a. Break down
 - b. Record keeping
 - c. Time line of receipt
- 14. Daycare
 - a. How to choose a daycare that works for you
 - b. CFS 2002 initial application and follow up every 6 months
- 15. Training credit
 - a. Virtual Training center (VTC)
 - b. Just in Time Training videos
 - c. Agency trainings
 - d. Support Group Trainings
- 16. Respite
- 17. Medications
 - a. Storing
 - b. Administering
 - c. Notifying caseworker when prescribed
- 18. Supervision plans (CFS 685)
- 19. Safety Procedures
 - a. Emergency Medical treatment of a child
 - b. Fire and Natural Disaster
- 20. Understanding the service plan and your role
- 21. Cultural considerations*
- 22. When a child leaves your home
 - a. Packing*
 - b. Life book
 - c. Grieving
- 23. What can you not make decisions on?
 - a. Hair cuts
 - b. Religion
- 24. Discipline and consequence
 - a. Understanding the child first*
 - i. Anticipating the child's needs
 - b. Various types of discipline *
 - i. Time in vs. time out



- ii. TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Interventions)
 - c. Looking through the trauma lens
- 25. Relationship building/attachment*
- 26. Hair care*
 - a. How to care for
 - b. Age appropriate styles
- 27. Medical, dental and vision appointments and expenses
 - a. Upon entering care
 - b. Annuals
 - c. When and what to communicate to the caseworker
 - d. Birth parent involvement
 - e. Prescriptions
 - f. Orthodontics
- 28. Counseling
 - a. Your role
 - b. Types of Counseling available
- 29. Visits
 - a. Transportation
 - b. Times
 - c. Role of the case aid
 - d. Preparing the child for the visit
 - e. Conversation after the visit
- 30. Clothing
 - a. Initial clothing allowance
 - b. Basic maintenance and supplemental clothing allowance
 - c. Fosters United clothing closet
 - d. Markie's Wish clothing closet
- 31. Communication- how to speak to case workers and birth parents
- 32. Why did you start fostering- how to keep that in focus
- 33. Supports
 - a. Family and friends
 - b. Babysitters (per Prudent Parenting Standards)
 - c. Support groups
 - d. The child welfare team
- 34. Boundaries and safeguarding against allegations*
- 35. Life books (Information found in Procedure 315)
 - a. Purpose
 - b. How to start
 - c. Roles



36. Emergency
 - a. CARES crisis hotline 1-800-345-9049
 - b. Emergency on call agency worker 815-962-1043
 - c. 911
 37. Welcoming children when they come *
- a. Review the noises of the home
38. Child placement folder
 - a. How to get information
 - b. Requesting the folder
39. Important questions to ask and things to consider prior to agreeing to a placement
40. Confidentiality and HIPPA guidelines *
41. Social Media rules and expectations*
42. State Wide and regional policy councils
 - a. What they are
 - b. How to join
43. What to do if you disagree with a decision
 - a. Agency decision
 - b. Court decision
 - c. School decision

FCH= Foster Care Handbook

ORG= Online Resource Guide

* indicates a training opportunity for Safety Plan Monitors



Appendix F



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Introductory form for the Mentoring Program

- Foster Parent Mentor**
 - Foster Parent Mentee**
- (please check one)**

Name: _____

In order to improve to have our relationship be the most beneficial I have completed the following outline of my schedule and contact information.

My Schedule

My Work Schedule: _____

Meal Time Schedule: _____

Reoccurring schedule obligations: _____

Bedtime: _____

Best time of day for contact: _____

Contact Information:

Home Phone Number: _____ Cell Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

You can contact me email? __YES__NO You can send me text messages? __YES__NO

The best way to contact me is _____

Children's Home + Aid Contact Person: Ashley Akerman, Statewide FPSS (773)569-1873 (cell)

Foster Parent Mentor's Role:

- To provide guidance and support to new Foster Families including:
 - Contact upon registration into PRIDE classes
 - Contact upon placement of new child and assist with advocating for special needs and initial concerns
 - Assist in dealing with system barriers through guidance in navigating the system of care



- Support with school system issues and court-related issues
- Support through transition with grief and loss
- Helping to understand the shared parenting rules and expectations
- To provide support for existing Foster Families in crisis, including situations such as disruptions, abuse investigations and foster care referrals
- To assist in recruitment of new Foster Parents by positive introduction to Foster Parenting and marketing of the QPI Brand
- To maintain and encourage absolute confidentiality in all information discussed with the mentee.
- To assist with ensuring that each new Foster Parent is equipped with all of the knowledge they will need to successfully navigate the foster care system independently

Foster Parent Mentor's Duties

- Mentor new foster family for minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12
 - Establish a personal, working relationship with Foster Parents
 - Physically meet with the Foster Parents in an agreed upon location at least once per month
 - Make phone/email contact as requested
 - Be available to us 24/7 as applicable and reasonable
 - Assist new Foster Parents in positively navigating the system of care
 - Review all of the required communication topics within the allotted time frame

Foster Parent's Mentor Signature

Date

Foster Parent's Mentee Signature

Date



Appendix G



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Foster Parent Mentor Program-Feedback Survey

Mentee Information: (optional)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Licensing Worker: _____

Mentor Information:

Name of Mentor: _____

Of months assigned a mentor: ____

1) Do you feel you understood the Mentor program and the role of the Mentor and Foster Parent Support specialist as support for your family? (Please circle one)

1-Not at All

2-Somewhat

3-Absolutely

If not at all, please explain.



2) Did you feel that the Foster Parent Mentor was available to assist you during critical times if you needed support or guidance? (Please circle one)

1-Not at All

2-Somewhat

3-Absolutely

If not at all, please explain.

3) Do you feel you were able to comfortably discuss all areas of concern that you had with your Mentor? (Please circle one)

1-Not at All

2-Somewhat

3-Absolutely

If not at all, please explain.

4) Do you feel that you are comfortable in your role on the team as well as in the shared parenting relationship? (Please circle one)

1-Not at All

2-Somewhat

3-Absolutely

If not at all, please explain.

5) Do you feel that you can successfully find answers to problems that may arise throughout your licensure? (Please circle one)



1-Not at All

2-Somewhat

3-Absolutely

If not at all, please explain.

6) Would you ever consider serving as a Mentor? (Please circle one)

1-Not at All

2-Somewhat

3-Absolutely

If absolutely, can we contact you to become a Mentor?

7) Are there any changes that you think should be made to the Foster Parent Mentor program to allow for it to be more impactful to future Foster Parents?

