



**County of Ventura, Children & Family Services,
Foster VC Kids/ Strengthen VC Families**

Partnership Agreement



Children need healthy childhoods, as well as loving and skillful parenting that honors their loyalty to their biological family and their need to develop and maintain permanent lifelong connections. The purpose of this document is to articulate a common understanding of values, principles, and relationships necessary to fulfill this responsibility in a respectful, positive, and collaborative manner.

The partnership CFS seeks to engage our caregivers in is grounded in the following agency beliefs:

We believe families can keep their children safe with support.

And if they can't...

We believe children should be cared for in a familiar, nurturing and safe environment.

And while they are in care...

We believe every child is entitled to thrive through stability (health, education, & placement), family connections, quality treatment and a voice in planning.

We believe, through partnership and support, parents can grow and change in order to safely parent their children.

And if the children cannot return home...

We believe all children deserve a sense of belonging, permanent and unconditional commitment in a lifelong family.

X _____ Date _____
ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT, *Caregiver*

X _____ Date _____
ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT, *Agency Staff*

X _____ Date _____
ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT, *Birth Parent*

RESOURCE FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

Caregivers and Agency Staff Work Together as Respected Partners

- Caregivers will conduct themselves in a professional manner and will work together with Agency staff and the child's family as a respected partner:
- Caregivers will share all relevant information and will provide input for the child's case & needs and services plans.
- Caregivers will respect the privacy & confidentiality of all case specific information related to the child & family. Any disclosures or sharing of information will be respectful, necessary to the care of the child, and limited to relevant information about the child's needs, and only to relevant parties.
- Caregivers will participate in Family Team Meetings.
- Caregivers have a right to participate in court hearings and submit JV290 requests to support the child.
- Caregivers will obtain, maintain and share records that are important and relevant to the child's well-being. This includes maintaining records of the child's primary connections, achievements, and milestones, and Life Book.
- Caregivers will resolve conflicts and challenges by working directly with their social worker. If additional support and problem solving is needed, caregiver will engage the CFS team to identify the primary issues leading to conflict, including Foster VC Kids Recruitment, Development, & Support team, Child Welfare Supervisor, and Child Welfare Program Manager (when appropriate).

Nurturing Children and Youth

- Caregivers will provide excellent parenting by being trauma informed.
- Caregivers will participate in services related to the child's needs, which may include but is not limited to, therapy and developmental services.
- Caregivers must be willing and able to learn about the child's culture, ethnicity and religion to support the child's connections to his/her family and culture.
- Caregivers will fully incorporate the child into their family activities, including vacations.
- Caregiver will not give notice to remove the child unless the removal is demonstrated to be in the best interest of the child or poses a safety risk to the child, caregivers or others in the home.
- Caregiver will participate and adhere to the child's transition plan developed with team members.
- Caregivers are expected to take advantage of all trainings they need to improve their skills as excellent, trauma informed parents.

Supporting Families

- Caregivers will work with agency staff to develop a plan for engagement with the child's birth family.
- Caregivers will work with the agency and family to support reunification services and activities.
- Caregivers will facilitate continuity for the child with the biological family by encouraging participation in medical related care, school, and other important activities.
- Caregivers will facilitate a smooth transition to another placement by sharing information about the needs of the child.
- Caregivers will respect and support the child's ties to family (parents, siblings, extended family members), and other significant relationships, and will assist the child in maintaining these relationships through facilitating appropriate visitation, transporting the child to visits, and other forms of communication in accordance with the case plan.
- Caregivers will maintain a relationship with the child (when it is in the child's best interest) and family to support continuity and successful reunification.
- Caregiver will request approval from the birth family or Agency regarding haircuts, ear/ body piercing and contraception.
- Caregivers will regularly communicate information and highlights about the child's life with the child's birth family in a manner appropriate to the placement, to benefit the family relationship.

Strengthening Communities

- Caregivers will advocate for children with the Agency, the court and community agencies.
- Caregivers will work in consultation with the Agency when advocating on behalf of the child.
- Caregivers will support the child's school success; including: participating in IEP meetings, attending school events, school conferences assisting with school assignments and advocate/support tutoring.
- Caregivers will provide developmentally appropriate opportunities to allow children and youth to learn and practice life skills and have hands-on experiences in preparation for transition to adulthood.

AGENCY STAFF EXPECTATIONS

Caregivers and Agency Staff Work Together as Respected Partners

- Agency staff will conduct themselves in a professional manner and will work together with caregivers as a respected partner:
- Agency staff will share all relevant information regarding the child and family within the County established guidelines. Relevant information includes: the child's needs and services plan, the reason the child entered care, current and past behaviors, physical, medical and mental status, school of origin, attorney name, court case number and court hearing dates. Staff will seek court or parental authorization when the disclosure of confidential information is relevant to the care of the child.
- When detention or placement changes occur, a Family Team Meeting will be held as soon as possible, and will include both the birth family and caregivers to support a partner relationship.
- Agency staff will support and facilitate caregiver participation in all team meetings and court hearings, and will seek caregiver input in the child's plan of care.
- Agency staff will provide timely notification to the caregiver for team meetings and court hearings.
- Agency staff will provide an alternative way for caregivers to participate in all team meetings if the caregiver cannot be present.
- Agency staff will respond to requests for information and contact within 48 business hours, and will provide contact information for his/her supervisor who should be reached in case of an emergency or time-sensitive issue.
- Agency staff will request caregiver schedule and availability to assist in visitation, medical appointment, and other service delivery planning and strive to schedule appointments based on caregiver availability.
- Agency staff will resolve conflicts and challenges by working directly with the child's caregivers. If additional support and problem solving is needed, the social worker will engage the Foster VC Kids Recruitment, Development, & Support team, Child Welfare Supervisor, and Child Welfare Program Manager (when appropriate).
- Agency staff will honor and respect a caregiver's right to take a time limited break (respite) without fear of adverse consequence from the agency.

Nurturing Children and Youth

- Agency staff will provide caregivers with the services and support they need to be excellent parents.
- Social Worker will complete an All About Me tool to share between the caregivers, children and birth family.
- Social Worker will plan and assist in successful teaming between the birth family and caregivers to support the child's stability.
- Agency staff will support caregivers in overcoming barriers to the child's full participation in family life and activities
- Agency staff will participate and adhere to the child's transition plan developed with the caregiver and other team members.
- Agency staff is expected to remain current on trauma informed practice.
- Agency staff will support the child's connections to culture, ethnicity & religion.

Supporting Families

- Social Worker will support caregivers by working together as a team by communicating the family's reunification plan.
- Social Worker will support a smooth transition plan for the child by sharing information about him/her, and support contact between the child and foster family.
- Agency staff will provide caregivers with information, guidance and support necessary to fulfill their responsibility.
- Social Worker will support the continued engagement of foster caregivers in the life of the child as it benefits the child and birth family, including post reunification.

Strengthening Communities

- Agency staff will support the caregiver's role as an advocate and respect their input.
- Social Worker will share with caregiver's information about child's health & wellbeing.
- Agency staff will support and facilitate the caregivers participation with all of the child's educational needs.
- Agency staff will support caregiver's decisions that meet the prudent parent standards.
- Agency staff will work with caregivers in facilitating appropriate opportunities to allow children and youth to learn and practice life skills and have hands-on experiences in preparation for transition to adulthood.

CO-PARENTING AGREEMENTS

As Co-parents who are part of a Safety Network of Support, Birth Parents and Resource Family Caregivers will

- Work together to compile and maintain a life book to keep a record of the child's successes, milestones, memories, and important connections. This will be provided to the child.
- Collaborate on and participate in services and resources to meet the child's needs.
- Strive towards addressing partnership challenges with each other in a respectful and solution focused manner.
- Provide positive coaching to each other and share information about what they have learned is supportive to the child.
- Strive to keep visitation schedules to ensure consistency and predictability for the child.
- Share transitional and other important objects/items to increase child comfort in out of home care.
- Seek feedback from each other about the care being provided to the child and will work through concerns together.
- Respect each other's right to some privacy, but will share relevant family and child history in order to provide high quality care.
- Collaborate together about food and snacks during visits for consistency.
- Respect each other's boundaries and develop mutually agreed upon plans for communication and information sharing.
- Speak positively about each other in front of the child and will model partnership to decrease confusion and anxiety for children.