

Spero Family Services

2025 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

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I. FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS

1. To be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration.

Spero Family Services believes foster parents are the principle change agents in the lives of the children served in the Family-Supported Adolescent, Specialized, and Traditional Foster Care Program. Furthermore, it is the belief of the agency that all interactions related to foster care and to the child welfare system are reflected by a mutual understanding of respect, dignity, and consideration.

1. Spero Family Services involves foster parents in the decision-making process of any placement in their home. This is completed by having the foster parents initially read the referral packet that has already been screened by the Licensing Specialist and the program supervisor. Foster parents are involved in pre-placement visits in the community and their home and invited to attend all transition staffings prior to placement. After placement, foster parents are continually involved by attending Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), court proceedings, clinical staffings and Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs).
2. Spero Family Services recognizes foster parents as part of the child welfare team. Foster parents are invited to participate in all CFTMs scheduled for their foster child's case. Foster parents are encouraged to utilize the CFTMs to gain assistance in assessing the child's behavior or other challenges that arise. A CFTM agenda/outline is included in the foster parent handbook, which all foster parents receive after obtaining the foster home license.
3. Spero Family Services promptly responds to requests for assistance from foster parents. For non-emergency calls, Spero Family Services staff will return foster parents' calls within a 24-hour period of the message being left (excluding weekends). When available, staff will return phone calls within the same business day.
4. Spero Family Services also offers a 24-hour on-call system for crises and emergencies. Spero Family Services staff will respond within 15 minutes to the on-call emergency phone after work hours.

5. If staff are out of the office for more than 2 days, staff members will leave a message on their email and leave a phone message so foster parents know who else to contact.
6. Spero Family Services staff provide monthly in-service support meetings for foster parents. Foster parents have a designated time during the support meetings to provide recommendations, helpful information and training to the staff and other foster parents.
7. Spero Family Services staff provide training, including trauma-informed training, and invite experienced foster parents as co-facilitators in training sessions to capitalize on the experiences, skills, and knowledge of foster parents. Opportunities for co-facilitation include but are not limited to, prudent parenting, cultural diversity, LGBTQ+ support, trauma-informed parenting, educational advocacy, safety, psychotropic medication management, juvenile court processes, adoption and guardianship processes, mental health issues and more.
8. Spero Family Services shows appreciation and recognition for the commitment of our foster parents through recognition at support meetings, yearly highlights in the Spero Newsletter and an annual foster parent appreciation activity.
9. Spero Family Services conducts an annual satisfaction survey, completed by foster parents. The survey is designed to allow foster parents to share their feedback and recommendations/suggestions regarding agency services.
10. Foster parents are encouraged to notify the program supervisor if they feel that they are not being heard as a contributing member of the team. All concerns raised by foster parents are staffed internally and result in a phone call or letter by the supervisor within one week.
11. Agency staff are held accountable for treating foster parents with dignity and respect through monthly supervision and the foster parent appeals process.
12. New staff receive training on the significant role foster parents play on the child welfare team. All new staff complete the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foundations training. At the beginning of their employment, new foster care staff receive a copy of the annual Implementation Plan.

2. To be provided pre-service and appropriate ongoing training to improve skills.

Spero Family Services believes that education and ongoing training are essential to the success of our program. Foster parent training is a structured, intentional process that prepares caregivers to support youth with challenging behaviors before placement occurs. It also promotes skill development through continuous learning as they provide in-home placement services. This training aligns with the program's treatment philosophy and methods, empowering foster parents to effectively fulfill their roles within the treatment process.

1. All foster parents complete DCFS Pre-Service PRIDE training which includes Educational Advocacy.
2. All foster parents have the opportunity to attend Spero Family Services training specific to program expectations and operations, including documentation, crisis/on-call procedures, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, Cultural Diversity, First Aid/CPR and Mandated Reporter. In addition, other foster care agencies are encouraged to present information at the monthly support meetings. Foster Parents also have accounts through the DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC) where they can register for a variety of training courses.
3. Spero Family Services solicits input at each monthly support meeting from foster parents of their needs and requests for training. Each agenda of the support meeting gives foster parents the opportunity to network and to ask for additional training topics. Following each meeting, foster parents are encouraged to complete a survey to gauge their satisfaction with that month's training topic.
4. Spero Family Services encourages active involvement of foster parents in training and monthly support meetings. Each month during the support meeting, there is round table discussion to draw on input from staff and other foster parents.
5. Spero Family Services provides yearly training courses to foster parents (i.e., Therapeutic Crisis Intervention) and encourages participation in trainings that are conducted by the agency's professional training department.
6. Spero Family Services utilizes professional expertise from other Spero Family Services programs, community members, and collaborations with external agencies to provide training.

7. Spero Family Services provides information to foster parents about DCFS training and a variety of learning opportunities available which can be done through the LDC.
8. Spero Family Services implements CARE through Cornell University. The CARE framework addresses 6 principles including Trauma-Informed, Relationship-Based, Family-Involved, Developmentally Focused, Ecologically Oriented, and Competency-Centered. Foster parents are educated on the CARE model in congruence with agency practices.
9. In addition, foster parents are encouraged to utilize DCFS LDC to register and track their training hours. Foster parents can view their transcripts through the password-protected secure website.
10. If training is needed by a foster parent or staff person and the topic is not being offered by one of the methods named above, the agency will locate a professional or knowledgeable person to conduct training in the office.
11. Spero Family Services' Licensing Specialist will make an annual training schedule. Foster parents are asked to give input for future training during the October Foster Parent Support Meeting and the finalized training calendar is dispersed during the December Foster Parent Support Meeting. The calendar is also sent to each foster parent via e-mail and an additional hard copy may be provided by the case manager, therapist, license specialist, if necessary. The training calendar is subject to change based on the needs of foster parents, availability, etc. Experienced foster parents and staff are given the opportunity to co-train courses together throughout the calendar year.

3. To be informed of how to receive supportive services from the agency.

Foster parents receive an on-call schedule created by the Foster Care Supervisor on a two-month cycle. This schedule provides non-emergency contact numbers for all program staff, contact numbers for all programs foster parents and emergency contact numbers (for evening/weekends/holiday) for on-call staff, including the Chief Program Officer. Foster parents are provided with procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. The on-call staff are available 24/7 for foster parents.

1. Foster parents are provided with a list of resources for support, information, and emergency numbers. This list is provided to the foster parents through the Foster Parent Handbook that is distributed once per year. Resources include the following:
 - a. SASS (Screening, Assessment & Support Services)
 - b. Medical Consent Hotline
 - c. Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline
 - d. Medical Card Hotline
 - e. DCFS Child Intake and Recovery Unit (CIRU)
 - f. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

4. To receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with child's service plan.

The foster parent is compensated by Spero Family Services as provided in the Foster Parent Agreement which outlines the duties and responsibilities of the foster parent and rate of pay per day. The rate per day is determined by IL DCFS and includes the foster parents' room and board as well as allowances for each youth. Daily rates are subject to change based off the contract between IL DCFS and Spero Family Services each fiscal year. Spero Family Services has an adolescent, specialized, licensed traditional, licensed home of relative (HMR), and unlicensed HMR contracts. Traditional youth shall receive a clothing expense allowance and personal allowance in addition to their board payment. Adolescent, specialized, licensed HMR and unlicensed HMR receive a flat rate per day, per youth

1. Payment will be made twice a month and shall occur on the 15th and 30th day of each month. The payment period will begin on the first day the child is placed in the home and will end on the day the child leaves the home.
2. The Spero Family Services accounting department processes foster care board payments on the Tuesday of the week payment is due. The Spero Family Services program supervisor submits the request for board payments no later than the Monday of the week that payment is due. If payment is due on a Monday or Tuesday, the program supervisor will submit the request for payment to the accounting department the week prior.
3. The program supervisor provides timely assessment of the foster child's placement and care by utilizing CFS 906 and Excel. The Excel document is broken down by contract and is

designed to calculate board payment and allowance rates based on the daily rates and number of days a child was placed in each respective foster home.

4. If payment dates are affected by bank closures due to holidays, etc., the foster parents will be notified of this delay by the Licensing Specialist. Direct deposit is available to the foster parents.
5. The following is a monthly break-out of how certain portions of the monthly reimbursement should be utilized:

Traditional Licensed Foster Care

Child's Age	Daily Rate	Housing	Clothing	Allowance	30-Day Total
0-11 Months	\$ 19.83	\$ 603.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 19.00	\$ 672.00
1-4 Years	\$ 19.63	\$ 597.00	\$ 55.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 672.00
5-8 Years	\$ 21.60	\$ 657.00	\$ 68.00	\$ 21.00	\$ 746.00
9-11 years	\$ 22.26	\$ 677.00	\$ 84.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 796.00
12 years & over	\$ 22.19	\$ 675.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 62.00	\$ 827.00

Daily Rates

Specialized	\$ 63.54
Adolescent	\$ 76.69
Unlicensed HMR	\$ 15.75

Respite Care Daily Rates

Licensed HMR	\$ 34.00
Traditional	\$ 34.00
Licensed Specialized	\$ 34.00
Licensed Adolescent	\$ 34.00

6. Any remaining amount is intended to cover any other expenses incurred by the foster parent in the care of the child(ren) in their home.
7. Adolescent and Specialized contracted foster youth have an additional \$100 included in their board for foster youth recreational activities. Only recreational expenses directly incurred by, or fees/materials specifically for the foster youth are approved. Any funds not used by the youth for recreational activities are to be put into a savings account with the youth's name on it. Foster parents will be required to submit a tracking sheet with receipts attached to

document recreational purchases and deposits and withdrawals from the youth's savings accounts. In the Foster Parent Handbook, there is a list of possible recreation activities.

8. Foster parents can request respite care for a youth placed in their home. They may also choose to provide respite care for a youth not placed in their home and are reimbursed for providing respite.
9. The agency will provide and pay for up to 3 days of respite for each foster family per youth, per year. If Foster parents request additional respite care from the agency-paid 3 days, they are responsible for paying the foster parent providing respite at the daily rate for their foster child. If the foster parent wishes for the agency to pay for up to 3 days of respite, it must be requested and approved in advance.
10. At the time of licensure, foster parents are provided with the Board Payment Agreement, which they are asked to sign acknowledging an understanding of the board rate and payment schedule. A copy of this is provided to the foster parent. If there are problems and/or concerns with payments, foster parents are to notify the Foster Care Program Supervisor who will work with the Accounting Department to resolve the issue/concern. If the Program Supervisor is unable to resolve the issue, then the Chief Program Officer is notified of the situation for resolution.

5. To be provided a clear, written understanding of the plan concerning the child's placement and how it will support his family relationship and cultural identity.

During the pre-placement process, foster parents are made aware of the permanency goal and the specific situation of the child regarding family contact and of any extended family connections that need to be respected and continued. This information includes any known mental health, behavioral, medical, educational, or psychological needs. This information is provided verbally to the foster parent prior to placement. Spero Family Services foster parents are strongly encouraged to attend ACRs, CFTMs and court proceedings with any youth placed in their home; therefore, they receive information of any changes in the service plan or permanency goal. In the event the foster parent is not present, the assigned case manager is responsible for notifying the foster parent of service plan changes, visitation plan changes and/or permanency goal changes. Foster parents are notified during the monthly home visit(s), via phone, and/or during CFTMs of

up-coming court hearings, ACRs, and visitation changes to ensure they have a verbal notification of the meetings.

1. Foster parents actively participate in the review and implementation of client service plan objectives for the youth during individual meetings with the case manager. This input includes the planning and implementation of the child(ren)'s visitation plan as well as the exchange of interaction between the foster child(ren)'s birth family and the foster parent. Spero Family Services also uses CFTMs to formulate the service plan. Foster parents are provided with a copy of the child's initial service plan and subsequent service plans within 5 business days of the ACR.
2. Spero Family Services foster parents are involved in the visitation plan and communication with the child's birth family when applicable. Spero Family Services foster parents are encouraged to transport the youth to the birth family visits, supervise the visitation accordingly and document/report observations of the visit to the case manager.
3. Foster parents are encouraged to preserve the cultural heritage of youth by respecting religious beliefs and traditions, supporting, and participating in familial traditions, strengthening family ties, cooking meals, and respecting clothing and music choices. The foster parent's responsibility in promoting the youth's right to family relationships and cultural heritage is taught within multiple principles of the CARE model.
4. If the plan is to remove a child from the foster placement, the foster parent receives a written Notice of Decision to Remove an Unrelated Child or Notice of Placement Change from the case manager that includes their appeal rights and/or right to a clinical review. All decisions to remove a child, and each Notice of Placement Change and Notice of Decision to Remove an Unrelated Child are reviewed and approved by the supervisor and Chief Program Officer.

6. To fair, timely and impartial investigations of licensing complaints.

All foster parents receive a copy of the DCFS policy concerning Investigations of Complaints and Service Appeals during the orientation meeting with the Program Administrator and/or Licensing Specialist. This policy includes the agency's investigation of alleged licensing

violations; how information is disseminated to foster parents and the foster parent's right to choose an individual or representative to be present during the investigation.

Spero Family Services will complete licensing investigations within the timeframes required by IDCFS policy & procedure. They can be agency-only investigations or concurrent investigations with IDCFS.

Program procedures are as follows:

1. Within 24 hours of receiving an allegation of violation of standard/rule against a licensed home, the Licensing Specialist makes an in-person visit to the foster home to inform the licensed home of the exact standard alleged to have been violated, explain the investigative process, and answer questions the family may have. At that time, foster parents are advised that they may have another person present during the investigation and are given up to 4 hours to locate someone to be present. If they choose not to have another person present, the foster parent signs an IL-DCFS document acknowledging they do not wish to have another person present, at which time, interviews with people in the home begin.
2. The Licensing Specialist completes the investigative process within 30 business days (unless an extension is needed and requested), which includes in-person interviews with all members of the foster home and ascertains whether a violation has indeed occurred.
 - a. If it has been determined that a licensing standard/rule had been violated, a certified letter is sent to the foster home citing the standard/rule violated and the agency's plan to correct the violation.
 - i. A corrective action plan or support plan is written, shared with the foster home in a face-to-face meeting, and implemented.
 - ii. Follow-up on the corrective action plan occurs no less than 90 days with the monitoring of the home occurring weekly if deemed necessary, to ensure that the safety and well-being of the child is secure.
 - iii. If a foster parent disagrees with a negative finding and/or corrective action plan, the foster parent has 10 business days to appeal the licensing

decision, by submitting a written notice to the Foster Care Program Supervisor and/or Licensing Specialist.

- b. If it has been determined that no licensing standard/rule has been violated, a certified letter is sent to the foster home informing the foster home of said determination.

7. To receive additional information to assist in the care of a child while in placement.

Spero Family Services will provide foster parents with any additional or necessary information that is relevant to the care of the child(ren) in the home.

1. Spero Family Services case managers share current and historical information with foster parents about the child(ren) placed in their home. All case managers are required to complete DCFS Foundations training prior to being assigned cases – which includes training on the type of child specific information that must be provided to foster parents.
 - a. In addition, the importance of sharing child specific information with the foster parent and accountability to ensure this is done is covered by the foster care Program Supervisor during individual supervision sessions with the case manager.
2. The case manager will see specialized and adolescent youth foster youth 3 times per month, with at least two of these contacts occurring in the foster home. Traditional youth in an unlicensed HMR placement are seen two times per month in the home and traditional youth in a licensed home are seen one time per month in the home. The case manager is expected to meet with the foster parents to provide and/or obtain relevant information pertaining to the foster youth during this time.
3. Foster parents are invited to participate in quarterly CFTMs for each youth in their home, at which time any pertinent information regarding the youth is discussed and shared with the child welfare team. This meeting addresses several facets of the youth's care and service plan (i.e., life skills, education, medical, mental health, vocational, etc.).

8. To receive specific information from DCFS and private agencies listed in the Children and Family Services Act and the Child Care Act of 1969.

Spero Family Services believes that working in the best interest of the child means that everyone working with the child is informed of pertinent information and foster parents have a right to all information regarding a child placed in their home or a prospective placement. The Spero Family Services case manager is responsible for providing all relevant materials to the foster parent about a child placed in their home. This documentation may include:

1. Case information and history – the child’s Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) service plan, reason the child came into care, permanency goal, legal status, visitation plans, and other vital information.
2. Placement history – dates of previous placements, reason for changes or disruption.
3. Health and medical history – known medical problems, known allergies, mental health/emotional disorders, current medications/prescriptions and instructions on the medication, immunization status, communicable diseases, hospitalizations, medical card information.
4. Behavior and social information- criminal background, substance/alcohol abuse, physical aggression, fire setting, runaway, sexual behavior, destructive behavior, eating disorders.
5. Educational information and history – current grade level, accommodation plans, 504 plan, Individual Education Plan (IEP), and special education testing.

The Foster Care Supervisor is responsible for holding case managers accountable to provide pertinent information to the foster parent. This level of accountability is addressed during individual supervision with the case manager, through supervisor review of the case file and documented on the supervision plan with the Program Supervisor.

1. To ensure case manager accountability, Spero Family Services staff follow DCFS Policy and Procedure by sharing of information.
2. All Spero Family Services case managers participate in DCFS Foundations training where they receive training on DCFS policy and procedures regarding sharing of information with foster parents.

3. Any new DCFS policies and procedures are communicated to workers through direct communication and/or training by DCFS, which includes follow-up monitoring and guidance from the Foster Care Supervisor.

9. To be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings in order to participate in case planning and decision making.

1. DCFS notifies foster parents by mail about pertinent ACRs. As a backup to the DCFS notification, case managers notify foster parents during in person visitation and/or by phone to ensure they have been notified and encourage them to attend. During the monthly home visit, upcoming scheduled appointments and meetings are reviewed with the foster parents.
2. The Spero Family Services case manager will notify foster parents of any meetings, court hearings, and/or staffings about the child(ren) in their home via in-person communication or by phone.
3. Case managers include foster parents in case planning for youth placed in their home through their attendance at meetings directly related to the youth.
4. Spero Family Services foster parents are encouraged to attend all meetings and/or staffings about their child including court proceedings, ACRs, Child & Family Team meetings, IEP meetings, CIPPs and/or other clinical meetings.
5. In the event the foster parent is not present, the assigned case manager is responsible for notifying the foster parent of service plan changes, visitation plan changes, and/or permanency goal changes within 48 business hours. Foster parents are notified by phone and/or during the monthly home visit of upcoming court hearings, ACR's, and visitation changes to ensure they have a verbal notification of the meetings.
6. The Program Supervisor is available to foster parents to discuss any concerns with case management and obtain all necessary information for the care of the youth in their home. The program supervisor meets monthly with case managers to ensure communication between case managers and foster parents is ongoing. This is documented in SACWIS case notes.

7. Spero Family Services therapist conducts bi-annual clinical staffing on the individual treatment plan for all youth receiving therapy through the Spero Family Services foster care program. The therapist contacts the foster parent to ensure they are informed of the staffing dates and times. If the foster parent is unable to attend the clinical staffing review, a copy will be provided to the foster parent by the next therapy session.
8. Case managers provide the foster parents with the names, addresses and phone numbers of all professionals from whom the foster youth receive services i.e.: GAL, Probation Officer, etc. Foster parents are encouraged to become involved with the professionals who work with the foster youth and to provide information received from other professionals to the case manager in a timely manner. Case notes are completed by staff and foster parents to hold all accountable for sharing of information.
9. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all meetings for their youth. In the event that the foster parent is not in attendance, the case manager will notify the foster parent of any decisions made by phone, email or in person.

10. To be provided, before placement, with any information a caseworker has that is pertinent to the child's care and the permanency plan.

Spero Family Services understands the importance of providing foster parents with consistent information related to the child(ren) in their care, to ensure appropriate services and care is provided to the child.

1. Spero Family Services will provide full disclosure of information to the foster parent regarding the child placed in their home – this disclosure occurs prior to placement, during pre-placement visits, at the time of placement, and through the duration of the placement. This information is generally provided in writing, CFS 600-4, and/or verbally and includes:
 - a. Medical history – including known medical problems or communicable diseases, immunization status, current medications – including psychotropic medication, healthcare provider, and medical card information.
 - b. Educational history – including any special education needs, current grade level, accommodation plans, 504 plan, and IEP.

- c. Child history – including the child’s section of the service plan, visitation arrangements, case history, how the child came into care, the child’s legal status, the permanency goal for the child, history of previous placements and reasons for placement changes, psychological evaluation including diagnosis, psychiatrist monitoring psychotropic medication, any other information pertinent to the child including specific behaviors (i.e. criminal history, destructive behaviors, substance abuse history), and child’s hobbies, interests, likes and dislikes.
2. On-going sharing of information about the child is especially important between Spero Family Services staff and the foster parent. Foster parents, case managers, and other members of the professional team write case notes on the foster child, which is another means of communicating significant and relevant information about the child and the family.
3. Spero Family Services case managers visit the foster home at least two times per month for specialized and adolescent youth and traditional youth in an unlicensed HMR placement, and one time per month for traditional youth, at which time they will communicate with the foster parent about any new information regarding the child.
4. Spero Family Services foster parents received PRIDE training and additional training from Spero Family Services about confidentiality issues as it relates to information that may/may not be shared about the child.
5. Information is provided at the time of placement with CFS 600-4, Sharing Information with the Caregiver: that is signed by case manager and foster parent.
6. Foster parents are routinely provided with the child’s portion of the client service plan and attend ACRs, where the information is reviewed.
7. Information is given of a court hearing that was not attended by the foster parent.

11. To receive written notice of any change in a child’s case plan or of plans to terminate the child’s placement, along with the reasons for the change or termination.

Spero Family Services will follow DCFS protocol for written notice of any changes in the youth’s service plan or placement.

1. In the event DCFS or Spero Family Services determines that a child should be removed from a licensed foster home, a written 14-day notice of removal is sent to the foster parent. The written DCFS Notice of Decision and Notice of Placement Change is mailed to the foster parents explaining why the decision to change placement is being made.
2. A copy of the service appeal process and the emergency review process is included in the letter to the foster parent.
 - a. Foster parents are reminded that an emergency review allows DCFS to make a temporary decision based on a concern that imminent risk of harm may come to a child while their case is in the service appeal process.
 - b. Foster Parents are reminded that they can request an emergency review within 10 days from receiving the notice of decision in which they may be able to stop DCFS from acting on its decision until their case has proceed through the service appeal process (if the child is not at imminent risk).
 - c. Foster Parents may request a service appeal in writing within 45 days of receiving the notice of the decision. This letter is sent to the IL DCFS Administrative Hearings Unit.
3. Spero Family Services foster care supervisor, and the licensing specialist are available to assist the foster parent by answering questions that may arise as a result of this change.

12. To timely notification of court hearings and right to intervene or request mandamus.

1. Spero Family Services case manager will notify foster parents in person, by phone or in writing of all court dates for the child placed in their home.
2. Spero Family Services and PRIDE training educates the foster parents on their supportive role for the foster child during court appearances, and the importance of advocating for the best interest of the child by providing the court with information about the child's well-being and placement. Their roles, responsibilities, and rights as specified by the Juvenile Courts Act are reviewed with them at that time. Court and Service Appeals training are included in Spero Family Services' Annual Foster Parent Training Schedule.
3. Accountability to ensure case managers are notifying the foster parent of court hearings is addressed in the monthly multi-disciplinary staffing for the child (which foster parents

are invited to participate) and supervision by the program supervisor to ensure this responsibility is being met.

4. Foster parents notify the program supervisor if they are not receiving notice of court hearings.

13. To be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with foster parents re-enters DCFS care.

Spero Family Services will support placement being consistent with the best interest of the child and will support the foster parent's right to be considered for placement when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parent re-enters foster care.

1. If in the best interest of the child, Spero Family Services will review the child's prior foster care placements and case documentation in regards to consideration for this placement. If the youth is of age to provide insight on prior foster homes, Spero Family Services will ask for their opinion about returning to this placement.
2. If the review of prior placements and case documentation suggests placement with the prior foster parent is in the best interest of child, Spero Family Services will contact the foster parent to determine if the caregiver has the capacity to receive the child and to determine if the caregiver agrees to having the child placed in the foster home.

14. To access the existing appeals process with the assertion that the appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.

Spero Family Services strives to provide the best working conditions for foster parents.

1. Spero Family Services creates an open atmosphere in which problems, complaints, suggestions, and/or questions receive a timely response from the Foster Care Supervisor.
2. If a foster parent is dissatisfied with the services provided and/or a decision made, they have the right to have their complaint and/or problem addressed through the grievance procedure that begins with the Foster Care Supervisor and progresses through the organization's chain of command with the Spero Family Services' President/CEO having the final decision in unresolved grievances.

3. No foster parent will be treated unjustly for voicing a complaint with Spero Family Services in a reasonable manner or for using the grievance process. If a foster parent is dissatisfied with the services provided or a decision made, they have the right and are encouraged to grieve their concerns without interference or fear of retaliation by any staff member.
4. Foster parents are protected by Spero Family Services' Whistleblower Procedure and Protection policy. A foster parent, who in good faith, reports a violation of applicable policies, procedures, requirements, and/or law are protected from any form of retaliation.
5. Foster parents should immediately report any circumstances of perceived retaliation to the DCFS Advocacy Office, Spero Family Services' Foster Care Supervisor, Chief Program, and/or Director of Quality.
6. Spero Family Services provides training to foster parents on the organization's internal grievance procedure and external DCFS appeal systems. This is done through the Foster Parent Training Schedule.
 - a. Spero Family Services provides foster parents with contact information for: DCFS Administrative Hearings Unit, Advocacy Office, and the Office of Affirmative Action and receive a copy of the Grievance and Service Appeal with the initial licensing packet.

15. To be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and the rights for foster parents when reporting misconduct by child welfare personnel.

Spero Family Services foster parents receive training during PRIDE and from Spero Family Services about the Foster Parent Hotline, including contact information. Training and contact information about the Office of Inspector General is also provided to Spero Family Services foster parents.

- a. Spero Family Services foster parents can reach the Office of Inspector General by calling 1-800-722-9124 (Monday – Friday 8:30am – 5:00pm). The on-call schedule for Spero Family Services includes contact information for the DCFS Foster Parent Advocacy Office and the DCFS Foster Parent Helpline. Foster parents receive annual Mandated Reporter training and are required to maintain their certification.

II. FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To communicate and share information with the child welfare team.

The importance of open communication between foster parents and Spero Family Services foster care staff is emphasized during PRIDE training and on an on-going basis. Specific to the importance of communication, Spero Family Services foster parents receive training prior to placement of a youth in their home on their responsibility to:

1. Document daily case notes, medication logs, and allowance logs. This documentation is to be turned into the case managers by the 10th day of the following month.
2. Be available to the caseworker to discuss any issues related to foster youth
3. Communicate any concerns about their ability to handle and/or care for specific behaviors.
4. Communicate all pertinent information to Spero Family Services case manager (i.e., problematic and/or concerning behavior, medication issues, school issues, violation of court orders, etc.).
5. The CFS 600-4 is also used to document and provide full disclosure about the child's special needs as well as the appropriateness of the home and the foster parent's ability to care for the child based on the child's need.
6. Foster parents learn the roles of all members of the child and family team during PRIDE training and which members should be included when there is information regarding the child that needs to be shared. The Foster Parent Handbook is given after the foster parent is licensed. This information is also available in the Foster Parent Agreement which is signed before any youth is placed in the home.

2. To respect the confidentiality of information about the child and his family.

Upon being licensed by Spero Family Services or acceptance of the transfer of license, foster parents are required to sign a statement regarding confidentiality of information. Training regarding confidentiality is required for our foster parents and for all employees of Spero Family

Services. This training is completed during monthly support meetings and documented on CFS 574.

Any breach of confidentiality is examined and if determined to be breached is enforced by agency policy and procedure and in accordance with Illinois' DCFS – IL Part 402 Section 402.24 Confidentiality of Information. All laws and regulations specific to confidentiality include Rule 431 - Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by DCFS is given to the foster parents to be placed in the foster parent handbook.

Spero Family Services trains parents to:

1. Keep confidential information pertaining to youth in their home in a file in a secure location.
2. Only discuss issues of confidentiality with the caseworker and/or program supervisor.
3. Not sharing personal information about a youth's case unless they have consent to do so.
4. Have a clear understanding of what information can be shared with others (i.e., teachers, doctors, community providers).

At any point that there are concerns of confidentiality being violated, Spero Family Services will address the issue immediately with the foster parent and provide additional training/monitoring as determined. During semi-annual monitoring visits, the Licensing Specialist reviews DCFS policy on confidentiality with each foster parent and provides additional information when necessary.

3. To advocate for children in the care of foster parents.

The importance of advocacy and the responsibility of the foster parents to advocate for the child(ren) in their care is addressed by Spero Family Services in on-going discussions and trainings with foster parents.

1. As noted in their Spero Family Services Service Agreement, foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in all meetings that pertain to their foster youth. This

includes staffings, educational meetings (i.e., parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings), ACRs, and court hearings.

2. During PRIDE training, our foster parents receive 6 hours of Educational Advocacy training, court training and service appeal training. These training courses are available as refreshers and documented on CFS 574.
3. Spero Family Services will provide additional training and/or resources in these areas when it is determined there is a need and/or when requested by a foster parent. This training will be made available at regular monthly Support Meetings.

4. To treat the child and his or her family with dignity, respect, and consideration.

During PRIDE training, Spero Family Services foster parents receive training on a copy of “Youth Rights and Responsibilities” policy, as well as DCFS’ “Client Rights” policy. Both documents are in the Foster Parent Handbook. In PRIDE training and on-going Spero Family Services training, our foster parents are trained to understand how treating their foster child with dignity and respect provides children with a sense of value and self-respect.

1. Spero Family Services case managers visit the foster home a minimum of two times per month for specialized, adolescent, and unlicensed HMR homes, and one time per month for traditional youth in licensed homes. The purpose of the visit is to ensure the safety and well-being of the foster child and to monitor that the youth and youth’s family is being treated with dignity, respect, and consideration. The case manager also meets with the foster parent to address any concerns within the foster home.
2. Spero Family Services therapist can visit the foster home based upon a clinical decision.
3. Any concerns about a foster child not being treated with dignity, respect and consideration will be addressed with the foster parent by Spero Family Services foster care staff through CFTMs in an effort to provide feedback and suggestions for enhancing the relationship between the foster parents, family and the child.
4. Spero Family Services monthly support meetings with foster parents are used to dialogue with foster parents about ways to enhance relationship building with foster children.

5. Spero Family Services includes mental health training in the monthly support meetings to help foster parents better understand and care for youth in their home.

5. To recognize their individual and family strengths and limitations, and to utilize appropriate supports as appropriate.

The assessment of a foster family's strengths, limitations, and needs begins during the licensing process, (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, preferences, support system, dynamics of the homes, character references, etc.) during pre-placement process and on-going after placement. In emergency placement situations this may not be an option.

1. When assessing a prospective child in the foster home, Spero Family Services staff and foster parents will mutually assess the foster parent's support that can be provided and supports needed to care for the prospective child.
2. Spero Family Services staff have on-going communication (monthly home visits, phone, counseling appointments, and CFTMs) to support the parent and identify additional support/needs of the foster parent.
3. Spero Family Services staff will provide additional training when parents have specific needs or concerns. This is completed through ongoing assessment via the monthly support meetings as well as the yearly training plan.

6. To be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.

Spero Family Services facilitates a monthly support meeting that at least one parent from each foster home is encouraged to attend.

1. The monthly support meeting provides education and training to foster parents. In addition, there is time set aside during each meeting to encourage networking among foster parents. This provides an opportunity for foster parents to get feedback or suggestions from each other based on similar experiences with a particular situation, behavior, etc.

2. Spero Family Services foster parents are provided with contact information for all current foster parents, so they can contact one another for support.

Spero Family Services provides information to foster parents about statewide foster parent associations, including the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and Illinois Adoption Advisory Council; however, it continues to be noted that participation in the association is challenging because the location of meetings is typically not held in the southern region of the state.

7. To assess their ongoing training needs and take action to meet those needs.

Spero Family Services staff and our foster parents have a responsibility to assess the foster parents' on-going training needs and help meet those needs. The assessment process begins prior to licensing the foster home and continues through the duration of the foster home being licensed.

1. Spero Family Services will utilize an open forum in the monthly support meeting to solicit training needs and/or requests from foster parents.
2. Spero Family Services conducts on-going foster parent training needs assessment identified through staff contact with foster parents (i.e., case manager and Licensing Specialist visits to the home), case supervision (between case manager and the Program Supervisor), and licensing monitoring visits.
3. Spero Family Services will provide a training component to the monthly support meeting and encourage co-facilitation with a foster parent.
4. Spero Family Services staff will notify foster parents of DCFS training and encourage attendance when the topic is pertinent to the specialized population we are serving or beneficial to our foster parents.
5. Spero Family Services will provide trauma-based training annually. Examples include DCFS trauma informed care training, CARE through Cornell University, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) curriculum, etc.

8. To strategize with agency representative to avoid placement disruptions and support the child if disruption occurs.

DCFS's design of the Adolescent Foster Care and Specialized Foster Care programs was intended to stop the pattern of children moving from foster home to foster home. Available research demonstrates that foster children suffer greatly when their lives are marked by instability, disruptions, and frequent changes in their foster home placement. Each time this occurs, the child is left to cope with another failed relationship and forced to make new caregiver attachments and begin over again with a new school and community. As a result, foster children with numerous placement changes have a much lower rate of success regarding their transition into adulthood. Adolescent Foster Care Programs in Illinois were created so that adequate support was available to ensure placement stability. Placement stability is the number one factor for foster children in making positive changes in their behavior and development and leads directly to successful outcomes for the youth as they move toward independence.

It is understood by the foster parent that removal of a foster child from a home is considered an extremely significant and detrimental occurrence and should only occur when absolutely necessary. When safety is not a factor in the removal of a child from a foster home, the decision to remove must be mutually agreed upon by both the agency and the foster parent. **THE REMOVAL OF A CHILD FROM A FOSTER HOME IS ALWAYS A LAST RESORT.**

1. Spero Family Services staff and the foster parent will maintain frequent and open communication to ensure early identification of a child(ren) at risk of disruption or causing a disruption in the foster home. This is done when Spero Family Services staff visit the foster home, during caseworker supervision, CFTMs, and at any time there is a problem and/or concern. Family counseling for the foster family can be provided by Spero Family Services.
2. Spero Family Services staff will work with foster parents to identify and implement supportive strategies to prevent placement disruption. Strategies include, but are not limited to, CFTMs, increased therapy for youth, foster family or biological family, respite, foster parent 24-hour access to on-call staff, and SASS services.

3. Spero Family Services foster parents are encouraged to maintain contact and participate in hospitalizations and/or residential services in order to maintain a relationship with the foster youth, increasing the likelihood that the youth may be able to return to the same placement upon discharge. During disruption, Spero Family Services continues communication with the foster family concerning the child.

9. To recognize the impact of foster care on relationships and take steps to minimize stress as much as possible.

Spero Family Services recognizes that fostering can be an extremely rewarding experience. However, the demands of parenting can also be stressful at times. Spero Family Services is committed to helping our foster parents recognize and manage their stress effectively.

1. Spero Family Services will provide training to recognize/minimize stress – individually and/or group. This will be available through Spero Family Services staff or through outside sources, depending on the needs of the family.
2. Spero Family Services foster parents have the right and ability, at any time, to request a voluntary hold in their home where no placements will be made. For example, a foster parent who has recently received a new placement will generally not be considered for subsequent placement for 2-4 months to allow everyone to acclimatize to the newness.
3. Spero Family Services encourages foster parents to network with other foster parents for support.
4. Foster parents can provide respite care for a youth not placed in their home and are reimbursed for providing respite. The agency will provide and pay for up to 3 days of respite for each foster family per child, per year. If the foster parent wishes for the agency to pay for up to 3 days of respite it must be requested in advance. If the foster parent needs more than 3 days during a year, the foster parents are responsible for paying the respite home the daily rate for their child(ren).
5. Spero Family Services will provide foster parents with information on relevant training opportunities related to stress management.
6. Spero Family Services training curriculum has a self-care component added during monthly Foster Parent Support meetings.

7. Upon request, foster parents will be given three (3) counseling sessions through Spero Counseling and Wellness Center, or prior approved counselor, to address any needs within the family. After 3 sessions, this therapy will be paid for by the foster parent.

10. To positively promote the benefits of foster parenting.

Spero Family Services is proud of the work our foster parents do to care for children entrusted in our care and encourage our foster parents to share their experiences with others. Spero Family Services believes that our foster parents' personal stories and experiences are the best recruitment tools to encourage other people in the community to consider fostering.

1. For recruitment, fundraising and marketing foster parents are contacted to share their foster care journey and are highlighted in many different media including print marketing, videos, podcasts, social media sites, newspaper, radio, and more.
2. Spero Family Services promotes the rewards and benefits of foster parenting through various media outlets (i.e., agency website, Facebook page, agency materials/publications, social media, radio, and newspaper).
3. Foster parents are celebrated in May and during the holiday season.
4. Spero Family Services foster parents are invited to attend all agency events.
5. Spero Family Services provides coaching and training to foster parents regarding public relations and the agency protocol for media contact which is listed in the Foster Parent Handbook.
6. Spero Family Services includes foster parents in recruitment activities (i.e., church meetings, radio, and video advertisements) to recognize their work and to give foster parents an opportunity to share their own experiences.

11. To know the role, right, and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child and the child's own family.

Foster parents are introduced to the roles of each member of the child welfare team during PRIDE training. Spero Family Services also provides training to foster parents about the Spero Family Services organizational structure (chain of command) and the respective roles of

members of the agency (i.e., administration, accounting), and the foster care team (i.e., program supervisor, case manager, therapist, case aide, adoption specialist, licensing specialist, and family finding specialist).

1. Spero Family Services foster care staff are encouraged to attend the monthly foster parent support meetings and training sessions with foster parents. Staff and experienced foster parents have the opportunity to co-facilitate selected trainings during the support meetings.
2. Spero Family Services foster parents are encouraged to be highly involved in the case through court attendance, ACRs, CFTMs, school meetings for IEP or 504 service plans, counseling, and any additional services the child may require.
3. Foster parents should participate in reunification efforts by supporting the child's return home goal, cooperating with visitation schedules, and ensuring the child is in attendance to those visits.
4. Foster parents have access to all levels of management within the agency.
5. Spero Family Services executives (i.e., President/CEO, Chief Program Officer, and Chief Clinical Officer) are invited to attend the foster parent support meetings. Foster parents are encouraged to ask questions and/or provide feedback about the program and the organization to executive staff. This can be accomplished through appointments set up with administration.
6. Foster parent support meetings allow foster parents to build relationships and support one another.
7. Foster parents are encouraged to review the Foster Parent Implementation plan annually. They are given opportunities to add input and offer suggestions in ways that empower the foster parent and ensures their voices are heard.
8. Spero Family Services has specific training regarding foster parent rights and responsibilities.
9. Foster parents sign the Foster Care Service Agreement which lists in detail the duties of the foster parents.

12. To know and fulfill their role as a mandated reporter and know policies regarding allegations that foster parents have committed abuse or neglect.

Foster Parents are provided training on their role as a mandated reporter; required by law to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Spero Family Services offers a variety of opportunities for Foster Parents to know their responsibility as a mandated reporter as outlined in PRIDE training.

1. During PRIDE training, foster parents are trained in their role and responsibilities as a mandated reporter. Contact information for the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE) is provided in the foster parent handbook.
2. During PRIDE training, foster parents are trained in the investigation process when a complaint/allegation against a foster home is received.
3. Foster parents are required to maintain their mandated reporter certification per DCFS.

13. To know the purpose of and to participate in ACRs, client service plans, and court proceedings.

Spero Family Services is committed to working together as a team for the permanency planning and success of our foster youth. Spero Family Services believes our foster parents play a critical role in the team and their involvement in ACRs, court hearings, and client service plan reviews are especially important. The foster parent's perspective on the child's adjustment to daily life is critical to the implementation and review of the service plan.

1. Foster parents receive training for the purpose of the permanency process and their responsibility to be actively involved. Notifications, through letters and/or emails, are sent to parents regarding any and all proceedings. All team members have input into the proceedings before filing. This is accomplished through team meetings.
2. Spero Family Services provides training to foster parents on expectations about their active participation in all meetings and hearings that pertain to their foster child's permanency and service planning.

3. Spero Family Services foster parents actively participate in all activities for their foster child: particularly ACRs, court hearings, CFTMs, clinical staffings, and educational meetings.

14. To know the child welfare agency's appeal process.

Spero Family Services provides training to all foster parents on our appeal procedure and foster parent's rights under this procedure. The grievance procedure has been incorporated into the Foster Parent Handbook. The grievance procedure is reviewed with the foster parent prior to a youth placed in the home.

Spero Family Services strives to provide quality service to the children and families we serve and to provide the best working conditions for our foster parents. Spero Family Services encourages an open and honest atmosphere in which problems, complaints, suggestions, and/or questions receive a timely response from the Foster Care Supervisor. If a foster parent is dissatisfied with the services provided and/or a decision made, they have the right to have their complaint and/or problem addressed through the process listed below. No foster parent will be treated unjustly for voicing a complaint with Spero Family Services in a reasonable manner or for using the grievance process.

Grievance is defined as concern, complaint or unresolved disagreement between Spero Family Services and a foster parent.

Foster parents have a right to grieve any disagreement with Spero Family Services' implementation of Foster Parent Law. If a foster parent is dissatisfied with the services provided or a decision made, they have the right and are encouraged to grieve their concerns without interference or fear of retaliation by any staff member. **Retaliation is prohibited.** Any circumstances of perceived retaliation should immediately be reported to:

DCFS Advocacy Office: 217-524-2029 or 800-232-3798 dcfs.advocacy@illinois.gov

DCFS Foster Parent Helpline: 866-368-5204

DCFS.StatewideFosterCareAdvisoryCouncil@illinois.gov

While it is expected that each member of the Foster Care staff and each Foster Parent take responsibility for open, direct communication and problem-solving, the following is the procedure for expressing and resolving concerns when routine methods have not been successful.

Submitting a Grievance

If the foster parent has attempted to resolve an issue informally through the persons involved and did not come to a mutually agreeable resolution, the foster parent should complete and submit the **Foster Parent Law Grievance form** and submit it to the agency for review and investigation.

Procedure:

Step 1 – Foster Care Supervisor

The foster parent should first discuss his/her concern with the Foster Care Supervisor either verbally or in writing. A foster parent may initiate Step 1 of the grievance procedure online at www.sperofs.org/contact/. If a grievance is filed verbally, the foster parent must inform the supervisor of his/her concern and advise the supervisor that this constitutes Step 1 of the grievance procedure. All grievances must be presented at Step 1 no later than ten (10) working days from the date of the event that resulted in the concern. The Foster Care Supervisor shall respond to the foster parent within ten (10) working days from when the grievance is presented to the supervisor. If the oral grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the foster parent and the supervisor, the foster parent may pursue the grievance by requesting that it be moved to Step 2.

Step 2 – Chief Program Officer

If the conflict or concern is between the foster parent and the Foster Care Supervisor, the foster parent may request a meeting with the Chief Program Officer and the Foster Care Supervisor to try to resolve the complaint/issue.

In the event the grievance is not resolved in Step 1, the foster parent may request a meeting with the Chief Program Officer to try to resolve the complaint/issue, within five (5) working days from the receipt of the answer of the Foster Care Supervisor in Step 1. Within ten (10) working days of meeting with the foster parent, the Chief Program Officer will provide the foster parent with a response to the grievance.

Step 3 – President/CEO

In the event the grievance is not resolved in Step 2, the foster parent may present their grievance in written form to the President/CEO, within five (5) working days from the receipt of the response from the Chief Program Officer in Step 2. The President/CEO may exercise either of the following options:

1. After receiving the written grievance, he/she will schedule a meeting with the foster parent to resolve the issue.
2. If the President/CEO does not schedule a meeting with the foster parent, he/she will provide the foster parent with a written response within fifteen (15) working days of receiving the written grievance.
3. The decision of the President/CEO is final.

A foster parent may withdraw their grievance at any step of the procedure by notifying the Foster Care Supervisor, Chief Program Officer, or the President/CEO. If a foster parent does not follow the grievance procedure, including time frames, the grievance will be considered withdrawn.

Copies of all grievance-related materials, including but not limited to the outcome of the grievance, will be maintained by the Spero Family Services' Director of Quality.

The Spero Family Services' Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure was developed with foster parent input. The Spero Family Services foster parent grievance procedure cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, or the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations.

15. To maintain accurate records.

During PRIDE training and Spero Family Services orientation, foster parents are trained in the importance of record keeping pertaining to the foster child and the expectations regarding what documentation is required by DCFS and Spero Family Services.

1. Spero Family Services Licensing Representative provides training to all new foster parents on record keeping – including storage of confidential information, types of documentation required, review of documentation forms, and timeframes for its completion. Documentation expectations are included in the Foster Parent Handbook.
2. Spero Family Services will provide additional training/monitoring when there are problems/concerns with record keeping.
3. During all licensing monitoring visits, the Licensing Specialist requests to see all documentation logs in the foster home to review for accuracy and completeness.
4. Spero Family Services provides each foster home with a folder to store/transport foster parent records.

16. To share information about the placement with subsequent caregivers/parents.

Spero Family Services staff and foster parents are provided training on the importance of sharing information with each other regarding the child's adjustment in the foster home. This responsibility is discussed routinely during case manager visit to the foster home, during the monthly foster parent support meeting, and during any meeting/staffing pertaining to the foster child.

1. Spero Family Services supervisory personnel train staff and foster parents on the type of information that should be shared, and the timeliness of sharing information (i.e. high risk/unsafe behaviors reported immediately) and documentation on medication logs, and daily case notes on the child in the home (which would include information about school, social activities, behavior, family involvement).

17. To provide care that respects the child’s cultural needs supports the relationship between the child and his or her own family.

Spero Family Services is committed to ensuring the cultural needs of our foster youth are met. Spero Family Services recognizes that one’s cultural and family history, cultural identity, community and neighborhood support, religious and spiritual beliefs are an essential part of the planning process for our foster youth.

1. Cultural diversity training is provided to foster parents during PRIDE. It is also on the annual Foster Parent Training Schedule.
2. Spero Family Services will identify internal and external resources outside the agency and in the community that a foster parent may need to meet the child’s specific cultural needs.
3. Foster parents are encouraged to meet the cultural needs of the children in their home by learning about the family’s culture, respecting religious beliefs and traditions, supporting, and participating in familial traditions, strengthening family ties, cooking meals, and respecting clothing and music choices.
4. The foster parent’s responsibility in promoting the youth’s right to family relationships and cultural heritage is taught within multiple principles of the CARE model.
5. Module seven, which encompasses Cultural Diversity, from the PRIDE training is also available through DCFS and the LDC site.