

Foster Parents and Social Workers: Allies and Advocates for Youth in Care

Foster parents and social workers provide essential roles in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the children who are entrusted in their care and supervision.

By working together as allies and advocates for youth in care, foster parents and social workers will be able to effectively identify, address and successfully fulfill the needs of children in care.

Following are some ideas about the importance of foster parents and social workers uniting together to ensure that the best interests of children in care are being met.

- **Develop and maintain a mutually respectful and cooperative working relationship with one another.** Youth in care rely on their foster parents and social workers, to form a partnership in order to ensure that their needs are being met.
- **Establish open and consistent lines of communication.** Just as communication is important for maintaining healthy relationships, it's essential for meeting the needs of children in care. When foster parents and workers are able to be open with each other, the potential for

misunderstandings is often avoided.

Social workers need to receive feedback from parents on a consistent basis. As a foster parent, you have relevant information to share. Your input is valuable and most workers appreciate it greatly.

Conversely, social workers have the responsibility of sharing information regarding a child who is in need of placement, but that information is not always available to the social worker.

For example, when an emergency placement occurs, the social worker is not always able to get all of the information at that time, due to many factors (time constraints, having the key people available, etc.).

However, it's imperative to share information, feedback, and input with one another throughout the course of the child's

placement in care.

Comply with the guidelines that are outlined in the case plan. Foster parents have a natural advocacy role in all areas and as a result, they need to fully consider the goals and objectives outlined in the case plan throughout their advocacy efforts.

Again, open communication is essential to ensuring the

Continued on page 2



ultimate success of the case plan. Be willing to share your opinions and suggestions with the social worker.

Work effectively with birth parents and extended family members. In foster care, the goal is to reunite children with their family when it is deemed appropriate and in the best interest of the child. Therefore, the child's family plays an integral role throughout the placement.

Teach and model positive parenting skills to the birth parent(s) by being supportive, consistent, respectful, and flexible regarding their child. Family interactions are a priority; unless deemed otherwise by the court.

Keep information about your child/youth in care and their families confidential. Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 48 -Children's Code and Chapter 938 – Juvenile Code, and "Rules for Licensing Foster Homes" prohibit the sharing of confidential case information with unauthorized people. If you have additional questions regarding confidentiality issues, we encourage you to talk with your foster care coordinator.

Collaborate with community groups, and local and state resources to provide the child and his or her family with assistance and support. Community groups and organizations are valuable resources for yourself, your child and your child's family. Consult with your child/youth's social worker about what opportunities would be available

and appropriate.

Seek out guidance and training opportunities through local and state foster and adoption support groups, associations and resource centers.

Local and state associations provide guidance, support, training, and mentoring/peer network support opportunities and are highly recommended resources.



Recommended Resource

Team Decision Making: Engaging Families in Placement Decisions

Experts believe that the most effective way to help children is to involve them and their families, friends and professionals in all decisions relating to out-of-home child placement.

(Annie E. Casey Foundation PDF Report)

aecf.org/resources/team-decision-making



6682 West Greenfield, Suite 310
Milwaukee, WI 53214
800-762-8063
info@coalitionforcyf.org

© 2008;
updated 2018

In partnership with:

