

FOSTER PARENT HANDBOOK

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

TFI foster parents are trained to recognize situations which constitute medical/psychiatric/behavioral emergencies.

1. A **MEDICAL EMERGENCY** may be defined as any situation in which the health of a child may be adversely affected if immediate assistance/intervention does not take place. Examples may include: serious accidents; loss of consciousness; allergic reactions, etc.
2. A **PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY** may be defined as any situation in which a child is in imminent danger to himself or others due to his current emotional state or a precisely diagnosed psychiatric disorder. Examples may include: suicide threats or attempts; poor reality testing; psychotropic medication issues, etc.
3. A **BEHAVIORAL EMERGENCY** may be defined as any situation in which a child's behavior has escalated to a point where physical management and/or law enforcement intervention is necessary to maintain safety and control. Examples may include: homicidal thoughts; assaultive behavior toward person; aggressive/destructive behavior toward property, etc.

DURING OFFICE HOURS

If you have an emergency during office hours, contact the TFI office immediately and ask to speak with your case manager or a supervisor. Our office hours are 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. We are closed on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Occasionally we will close the office on days around the holidays, however the staff will notify in advance foster parents if this occurs.

After-Hours

If you have an emergency after-hours or during holidays, please use the following order of phone numbers to contact TFI:

1. If it is a situation requiring immediate police or medical intervention, call 911 first.
2. Call your TFI case manager at their residence or other contact number.
3. If there is no response **within a reasonable amount of time**, call the after-hours cell phone that you are given by your worker. **Please note that this cell phone is for emergencies only, and is not to be used as a means of contacting TFI for non-emergency situations.**
4. If you are unable to reach your case manager or the individual with the on call cell phone, call 785-230-9150. Again, this is to be used in case of emergency only.

When you contact a TFI staff person, be sure to let them know all actions that you have already taken in dealing with the situation.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Emergency Contacts:

Secondary emergency cell – (785) 230-9150

*****DO NOT...**

- **Do not call the DFPS emergency number.** These agencies contract with us to handle emergency situations. If the department caseworker needs to be contacted, most of the time, the TFI staff person will do this for you. If you have more complete and accurate information, you may at times be instructed to call the DFPS emergency number, but do not do this until advised by TFI staff. Please remember that in all cases you must go through your TFI Case Manager we are ALWAYS your first point of reference.
- **Do not call after-hours to have a child removed from your home.** A child can only be emergency-removed from your home if there is a direct threat to persons or property, in which case the police will be called to intervene, or a child will need to be hospitalized for psychiatric assessment. Remember that your contract with us (and ours with the placing agency) requires a 30 day notice for the removal of a child.

FOSTER HANDBOOK - TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EMERGENCY PROCEDURES		2-3
II.	TFI FOSTER PARENT EXPECTATIONS		6-17
	A. Quality of Care		6
	B. Licensure		6
	1. The Process		6
	2. Transferring to/from TFI		8
	3. Changes in Your Home or Family		10
	4. Training Requirements		11
	C. Reimbursement		15
	D. Foster Parent Grievances		17
III.	EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING THE CHILD		18-32
	A. Confidentiality		18
	B. The Referral Process/Pre-Placement Visits		19
	C. Total Number of Foster Children		20
	D. Placement Information List		21
	E. Travel Authorizations		23
	F. Respite		24
	G. Supervision/Alternative Caregivers		25
	H. Medication		26
	I. Discipline		27
	J. Client Rights and Responsibilities		29
	K. Allegations and Investigations		30
	L. Rules Violations		30
	M. TFI & Foster Parent Roles		32
IV.	GENERAL CARE AND RESPONSIBILITIES		33-37
	A. Transportation		33
	B. School		33
	C. Therapy		34
	D. Medical Appointments		35
	E. Holidays and Birthdays		35
	F. Tips on Daily Care		36
V.	DISCHARGES		38-40
	A. Cautions		38
	B. Notice Policy		39
	C. Emergency Removals		39
	D. AWOL		39
	E. Clothing Inventory		39
VI.	DAYCARE POLICY		41
VII.	BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS		42
VIII.	INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO TEXAS POLICY		43-46
	A. Roles of Foster Parents and TFI		43
	B. Training		44
	C. Communication		44
	D. Financial Reimbursement		44
	E. Placement Procedures		45
	F. Support Services		45
	G. Information Sharing		45
	H. Participation in the Treatment Process		46

THE HANDBOOK SIGNATURE FORM IN THE BACK OF THIS HANDBOOK MUST BE SIGNED AND RETURNED TO TFI STATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE HANDBOOK AND AGREE TO ADHERE TO ALL POLICIES/PROCEDURES.**

I _____ have read and received a copy of the TFI Handbook, Mission Statement and the TX Policies on foster care **and** agree to follow these standards.

Signature Parent #1

Date

I _____ have read and received a copy of the TFI Handbook, Mission Statement and the TX Policies on foster care **and** agree to follow these standards.

Signature Parent #2

Date

TFI FOSTER PARENT EXPECTATIONS

TFI MISSION STATEMENT

Devoted to the Strength of Family

QUALITY OF CARE

TFI is committed to continuous quality assurance and improvement in all phases of our agency. With our foster parents, this means maintaining a set of standards with regards to home, training and quality of care issues. To ensure that these minimum standards of care are being maintained in our foster homes, your case manager will discuss with you and complete a Foster Parent Monitoring Review on a quarterly basis. This review is very similar to a review Residential Child Care Licensing Staff may conduct at any time, announced or unannounced in your home. Therefore, in preparation for monitoring by the state, if there is a deficit in one of these areas, your case manager will work with you on a plan to improve the situation before the next review.

LICENSURE

The step-by-step process (for non-transfers). You will be responsible for participating in training, transportation costs and child care costs for you to attend the trainings. TFI offers a \$200 licensing bonus once you are licensed to help offset these costs.

1. **Orientation.** Each foster parent must attend pre-service training. Contact TFI for the date and times of each session. Note that pre-service training does not count towards your annual training hours that you need to complete after licensing. All foster parents must also read the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services Minimum Standards and agree to abide by them. An electronic copy of these will be given to you at the time of or prior to your home’s verification.
2. **Application.** Complete a foster parent application and return it to TFI. Please be sure that your references know that they can mail their form directly to us, and that all other information is complete and accurate.
3. **Background Checks.** After your orientation, we will ask you to complete a Criminal History Consent Form. These forms **must** be completed for **every person age 14 or older (excluding foster children)** residing in your home. TFI is required to re-submit your criminal background checks every two years. New foster parents who are not transfer homes are also required to submit to fingerprint checks. TFI staff will guide you through this process.

****IF YOU HAVE A RECORD, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU INFORM TFI OF THIS PRIOR TO YOUR RECORD CHECK!!!!****

4. **Health Status.** You will be given a health status form for each person residing in your household. Please ensure these are filled out by your regular physician, so that we can be sure you are physically up to the challenge of providing foster care.

5. **Fire and Health Inspections.** The state requires that all licensed foster homes have approved fire and health inspections completed every two years. For foster group homes, these are required annually. It is the responsibility of the foster parent(s) to pay for these ongoing requirements.
6. **Home Study and Licensure Approval.** Once all of the above steps have taken place, you will be contacted by the TFI staff to schedule a home study. During the home study, the staff will visit your home to be sure that your home is in compliance with the Texas rules for foster homes. The staff will also need to interview each member of your household, including your children, so please be sure that everyone is in the house for the home study. Upon successful completion of all required forms, pre-service training and other licensing requirements, and upon receipt of all required record checks with positive outcome, TFI staff will submit your home to our licensing committee for approval and licensing.

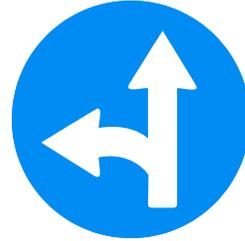
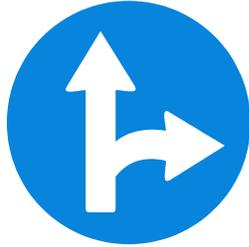


TIP:
Some general fire safety requirements:

*Smoke detectors on each level	*Fire extinguisher	*Reasonable access to escape route
*No extension cords	*No holes in walls or ceilings	*Recreation equipment in safe repair
*Storage areas free of clutter	*Fire evacuation plan posted	*Access to working telephone

7. **Other Requirements.** Potential foster parents must submit a copy of their proof of income, valid driver's license and automotive liability insurance before licensure. During your time as licensed foster parents, you must maintain your valid driver's license and maintain your automotive liability insurance. Regularly during a foster parent's tenure with our agency, checks may be made to ensure that your license remains valid. You may also be required to display proof of income, ongoing driver's license and liability insurance again during your time with TFI. We also must have copies of all of your pets' current immunizations and ask that you inform your TFI case manager any time you get a new pet, or one leaves your home to ensure immunization information is kept up to date. This information will also be asked of you during your home's health inspection.

8. **Transferring Your License.** Please see details below on the transfer process.



Transferring Your License From TFI To Another Agency:

While we do not want to lose you as a foster parent, we do understand that a time may come at which, due to various circumstances, you may wish to transfer your license to another agency. Things to consider when transferring:

- 1) Your fire and health inspections, training hours, including first aid/CPR, psychotropic medication training, and behavior intervention training will need to be current. Another agency will not be able to license your home without this information being up-to-date.
- 2) In order for it to be considered a transfer, you would have to have children currently placed in your home. If not, the agency you are hoping to transfer to will have to perform a more in-depth screening of your home.
- 3) Foster children are placed with TFI, and we in turn place them in your home. Your foster children's caseworkers need to be aware of your intent to transfer and must give authorization for the children to remain in your home.

You may request a transfer by notifying your TFI case manager. Upon receipt of a release and request for your home's information, TFI will provide your new agency all the required documentation.

Transferring Your License To TFI

If you want to transfer your license from another agency to TFI, we'll be more than happy to work with you. As a professional courtesy, however, we ask that you first talk with your current agency about your desire to transfer. Additionally, be sure that your training and license requirements are current. Next, contact our TFI staff for the necessary transfer paperwork. Be aware that some agencies are not very cooperative when they are aware that their foster parents want to transfer their license to another agency. In this situation, if this occurs, please let TFI's staff know so that we may assist you in facilitating a smooth transition for everyone. Please remember to be cooperative with your agency and with TFI, so that we may ensure there is no disruption in your period of licensure.

It is ultimately TFI's decision whether or not we accept you as a transfer home.

Private agencies are under more and more scrutiny all the time, and unfortunately this leads to agencies putting families under similar pressures. Patterns of complaints, allegations, investigations, communication and cooperation problems with previous agencies are all considered when screening a potential transfer home. Please be advised that in the event that TFI receives negative or questionable information regarding your previous tenure as a foster parent, we may opt to not pursue

verification of your home, out of safety for children entrusted in our care. It is our practice to err on the side of safety and caution when considering such circumstances.

CHANGES IN YOUR HOME AND FAMILY:

Any changes in your home and/or family **must** be reported to TFI **immediately**. This is due to the fact that these changes need to be reflected in your family record. These changes include but are not limited to:

- Any person (adult or child) moving into or out of your home including biological children returning from college/military, etc. Remember, no one over 14 may move into your home without a cleared background check and a negative TB test result.
- Any major renovation to your home or any renovation affecting the bedrooms of foster children.
- Any major damage to your home such as by fire, flooding, or natural disaster.
- Any births or deaths in your household.
- Any plans to move to a new residence.
- Any new pets coming in to the home, or pets no longer at the home.
- Any person in your household being arrested for, charged with, or convicted of any offenses.
- Intent to provide day care. TFI's policy is to not have our foster parents provide day care.

Note that other changes may need to be reported as well-when in doubt, ask your TFI case manager.



TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All prospective foster parents, TFI staff, foster parents, or agency home child-care staff will receive an orientation to TFI's agency policies and the services provided. All prospective foster parents or group home staff will complete the PRIDE pre-service training curriculum in areas appropriate to the needs of children for whom they will be providing care. In addition, foster parents and group-home staff must obtain and maintain First Aid and CPR certification, as well as training in psychotropic medication and behavior interventions. No children will be placed in a home where pre-service training has not been completed. For special programs such as therapeutic, primary medical needs, habilitative foster care, or foster care for children with autistic-like behavior additional hours of pre-service training specifically targeted to the needs for fostering the selected population will be required. All pre-service training will be per person, not as foster home unit.

The training offered by TFI will cover topics relating to Foster Care Provision and may include one or more of the following instructional methods:

- Active participation in class
- Written assignments
- Verbal feedback
- Role play
- Group discussion
- Reviewing audio/video tapes
- Tests



It is the responsibility of the foster parents to get the required number of training hours each year to maintain their foster parent license. Depending on your home's license and composition, annual training requirements vary. Annual training may not be per unit, and it is required that each licensed foster parent obtain his/her own training hours. TFI will hold monthly training sessions for re-licensure on topics relevant to therapeutic foster care. It is imperative upon going to training that you put your name on the sign-in sheet so that it will be documented that you attended. **Foster children and biological children are not to attend foster parent trainings.**

Not only is training a requirement, it's helpful. You will be able to talk with other foster parents and build support systems with them. Our trainers can also offer new ideas to help you with ongoing problems.

If either foster parent in a home has not completed the minimum training hours by the license anniversary, you will not be able to be re-licensed and you run the risk of the foster children in your home having to leave. *WE CANNOT EMPHASIZE ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE OF FOSTER PARENTS HAVING TRAINING, AS WE ARE A THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE AGENCY.*

**If you did not receive a copy of TFI's training schedule, let your case manager know-
we'll be happy to get one for you!**

“I CAN’T MAKE IT TO THE TFI MONTHLY TRAINING. CAN I GET MY TRAINING HOURS SOMEWHERE ELSE?”

OTHER AGENCIES

For annual training requirements, foster parents can attend training sessions given by other private foster care agencies, Child Welfare agencies, and the Texas DFPS. Additionally, some other trainings given by child-serving agencies qualify. Any training you wish to attend must be PRE-APPROVED in order to qualify for on-going training hours. Please be sure that we receive a certificate or other verification of your attendance from the other agency, so that you will receive credit for the hours.

VIDEO AND/OR BOOKS

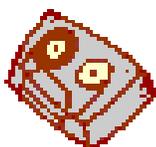
You may earn up to one third of your required hours by self-instructional training. Self-instructional training is defined as training that is designed to be used by one individual working alone and at their own pace to complete lessons or modules. Examples of this type of training include computer based training, written materials, or video training. (I.E. if you need 30 hours per year, you may earn up to 10 hours online, by video and/or books.) Your local public library will likely have documentaries and/or instructional videos related to fostering subjects such as child care, children’s mental health, etc. Once you have completed a video and/or book, each foster parent must complete a video/and or book training form which can be obtain at the office or through your case manager.

COLLEGE AND ADULT EDUCATION COURSES

Related College classes may qualify in place of your training hours. Note that these hours **ONLY** apply to the foster parent enrolled in the course.

ONLINE TRAINING

There are online training courses especially for foster parents if you are interested in these, talk to your TFI Case Manager about what trainings there are available. The Texas Minimum Standards limit the number of hours you may obtain from online training courses, so talk with our staff to ensure you don’t waste time and money on more hours than you can be awarded.



In all cases (other agencies, videos and/or books, and college courses, online training), you need to obtain permission from TFI in advance in order to ensure that the training will qualify, otherwise, you may not receive credit for the hours.

NOTE:

CPR

Texas requires that potential foster parents obtain and maintain CPR and First Aid Training as part of their pre-service training. These sessions can be obtained through various resources for a fee or your TFI will provide this training for you on occasion. Not only will you be working toward meeting your training requirements, but most

FIRST AID

importantly you will also be learning skills that can help save someone’s life-maybe someone in your own family.



You are also required to continue certification in these areas. Depending on where you receive the training, it may be good for 2 or 3 years. Your cards should indicate expiration dates.

REIMBURSEMENT

MONTHLY PER DIEM CHECKS 10th & 22nd

Monthly per diem checks are mailed from the Central Office to the foster parents if the family opts out of direct deposit. Homes are responsible for filling out a “Days of Care” sheet for each 2 week period and turning it into for review and submission. If you feel that there is a discrepancy in your check, please bring it to the attention of your Regional Office, where the matter will be investigated and reported back to you.

CLOTHING

We offer up to \$100 initial reimbursement for clothing per child but must be purchased within the first 30 days of placement. There will be no clothing reimbursement if the child is being transferred from another TFI home. If your child has the reimbursement, the process is as follows. The foster parent will buy up to \$100 worth of clothing for each child after an initial clothing inventory has been completed and you have discussed it with your case manager who will make a copy of the receipts and will provide you with a copy on the next home visit. If the child needs anything else, it is the foster parent’s responsibility to provide the child with what they need from the monthly per diem check. Please note that this is specifically a clothing allowance. Toiletries, diapers and other care items are not reimbursed. If you have plenty of clothing, consider purchasing a size up from the child’s current size to maximize the amount you may receive back.

When a child is placed in your home, you must complete a clothing inventory within the first week. A clothing inventory is then required on a quarterly basis as long as that child is placed in your home.

NOTE: It is TFI’s policy that we do not dictate how you spend your per diem check. However, we believe that your check is more than sufficient to cover any normal expenses in the care of a foster child. Therefore, if a reasonable expense comes up in the course of a month for your foster child, then TFI would expect that funds for these expenses would be readily available.

MILEAGE

TFI reimburses foster parents at a rate of .38 cents per mile for transporting foster children, less 20 miles per round trip. If there is a sibling group going to the same destination, only one child's name is to be listed on the blank. To and from addresses from foster parents are needed on the travel forms. You can use the check boxes to mark the purpose of the trip, and any 'other' mileage is explained at the bottom of the form, but keep in mind "other" travel must be authorized by a supervisor to be approved.

MEDICAL/SCHOOL FEES

All necessary medical charges are to be handled through the Medicaid program through Texas Department of Family & Protective Services. Miscellaneous school fees (i.e. book clubs, etc.) are the responsibility of the foster parent. Upon school enrollment, each child qualifies for free lunches.

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

School supplies such as book bags are the foster parent's responsibility. If the child's primary mode of transportation is the city bus, then bus fare must be made available for them if it is a required activity. There may be a minimum allowance be established. If there is a question on paying for a certain item, please ask your TFI case manager, **not** the State caseworker.

PROCEDURE FOR FOSTER CAREGIVER GRIEVANCES

A foster caregiver/applicant, having a complaint, is encouraged to first attempt to resolve it informally with their assigned case manager at the time the incident giving rise to the complaint occurs, or as soon thereafter as possible. If the foster caregiver/applicant is not satisfied with the result of the informal meeting, the following formal steps may be pursued:

1. The foster caregiver/applicant shall present, within ten working days of the event, a **WRITTEN** grievance to the case manager. Within five days of the receipt of the written grievance, the case manager shall hold a meeting with the foster caregiver/applicant to discuss the grievance. The case manager shall respond to the grievance, in writing, within five days of the meeting.
2. Should the foster caregiver/applicant not be satisfied with the written answer received in Step 1, within five days after the receipt thereof, the foster caregiver/applicant may appeal the grievance in writing to the administrator. The administrator shall hold a meeting within five days of receipt of the grievance.
3. Within five days of the meeting the administrator shall render a decision verbally and in writing which shall be final and binding. This information will be mailed to the foster parent.

All TFI policies, procedures and minimum standards are available for review upon request at the TFI Office.



EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING THE CHILD

CONFIDENTIALITY

TFI and the Texas DFPS strictly prohibit a foster parent from discussing a foster child's case with anyone not officially involved in the child's care and treatment. As a foster parent, you need to ensure that you do not share a child's paperwork or discuss his case with anyone unless they are members of the treatment team or previously approved by your TFI case manager. Even with the approval of your case manager, it is important that you use discretion in how much information you share. For example, it would be appropriate to advise your (pre-approved) alternate care provider that Johnny needs close supervision around other children due to sex abuse issues, but it would be unnecessary and appropriate to discuss any details of the abuse with them. A good rule of thumb is that it's better to err on the side of being too reserved rather than too open. When in doubt, ask your case manager.

TIP:



We strongly recommend that you keep all of your child's paperwork in a separate binder and in a secure place. That way, you not only preserve the confidentiality of the records, but you also can find the documents you need when you need them, such as for medical and/or therapy appointments, school, team meetings, and so on.

PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

THE REFERRAL PROCESS:

When TFI receives a referral from DFPS, juvenile probation or another agency for placement of a child, our placement coordinator tries to determine which foster homes would be best suited to the child's needs and limitations. He/She contacts those families and reads to the foster parents all of the information received on the referral. When TFI is sharing a referral with you, we will give you all the information available about a child's previous placements--we want you to make an informed decision. If the foster parents state that they are interested in having the child placed with them, the coordinator then calls the placing agency to inform them that we have an available home. If the custodial agency decides to approve placement with that foster home, the coordinator (and the TFI case manager, if available) then arranges a date and time for placement between the agency and the foster parents.

PRE-PLACEMENT VISITS:

Under some circumstances there will be an opportunity for a pre-placement visit for you to meet a child before agreeing to his/her placement in your home. Such a visit may last anywhere from an hour to overnight, depending upon the child's and your circumstances. While these visits are **NOT** reimbursable on your per diem check, they are an invaluable means of better determining if a child is a "match" for your home.



“WHY HAVEN’T I HAD ANY CHILDREN PLACED IN MY HOME LATELY?”

There may be several different reasons for this situation. One of the most common is that State agencies will often stipulate the type of home they’re seeking for a particular child (e.g. location, ethnicity, number and ages of children in the home, etc.), based upon that child’s treatment needs. Hence, in many cases only a few homes meet the specifics requested in a referral and may be contacted for placement. Aside from these circumstances, if you wish to have another child placed in your home, please let your TFI case manager and/or the placement coordinator know, and they will be happy to discuss it with you. Texas Family Initiative uses an innovative approach to placements, a system known as “ECAP”, Every Child a Priority. ECAP uses family profiles to optimize appropriate matches for both children and families.

“HOW MANY FOSTER CHILDREN AM I ALLOWED TO HAVE?”

Occupancy limits are set by the Texas Regulations. Your original home study will also dictate how many children your space and set-up will allow you to have. Texas rules and /or TFI rules state the following:

- A TFI foster home will not care for more than 6 children, including the children of the foster family.
- A TFI family group home will not care for more than 12 children, including the children of the foster family.
- A TFI home will care for no more than 2 infants under 18 months of age. If 2 infants are cared for, no more than 2 other children under 6 years of age may be cared for in the home. This includes the children of the foster family and children for whom the family provides regular part day care.
- A TFI home will not provide more than one type of care if this conflicts with the children’s best interest, or with the use of staff or space in the home.
- Each child must have his or her own bed and mattress, complete with waterproof mattress covers;
- Each child must have storage space for clothing and personal belongings.
- A child over six years old must not share a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex.
- Children must not regularly sleep in a room with an adult. A child under 3 years of age may sleep in the room of the foster parents but must be pre-approved.
- TFI ensures that when children of different ages, developmental levels, or social needs are grouped together for any purpose, there will be sufficient staff supervision to prevent the children from abusing or mistreating one another.
- A TFI home that provides habilitative, primary medical, therapeutic or autistic care must not provide any other type of care if this conflicts with the children’s best interest, or with the use of staff or space in the home.
- Placement of a physically handicapped foster child in a family foster home shall be made only after the agency has assured that any necessary special arrangements to meet the child’s needs have been made.

If you have questions, contact your TFI case manager for more information.

A FOSTER PARENT'S PLACEMENT TO-DO AND NOT-TO-DO LIST:

DO...

- Inventory the child's clothing on a Clothing Inventory Form as soon as possible after placement. Again, keep a copy for your records while giving another to your TFI case manager.
- Register the child for school in your district, unless another school is specified by the county agency or the child's IEP (Individual Education Plan). Your TFI case manager will assist you in obtaining the necessary paperwork and signatures from the county agency.
- Schedule the child for initial medical, TB screen and dental examinations within thirty days of placement. If the county agency does not specify a physician, or dentist, you may utilize your family's doctors, provided they accept Medicaid. You will be provided with forms which must be filled out by the physician and dentist; after the appointments, return those forms to your TFI case manager, who will make a copy for the child's file. In the event a foster child wears glasses, you may obtain an optical form from your TFI case manager to ensure he or she has updated optometrist appointments. If you are not sure if the child needs an optical exam, always err on the side of caution and schedule one when first placed.
- Find out the child's visitation plan and therapy appointment schedule, and then ensure that these appointments are kept.
- Be prepared to maintain a daily log of the child's activities, behaviors and intervention techniques used. Your case manager will provide and discuss the daily log form.
- Do inform TFI when you have a specific set of criteria that may or may not come up when screening for placements. It will help our staff to make better matches if we are clear on your rules and expectations from the beginning.

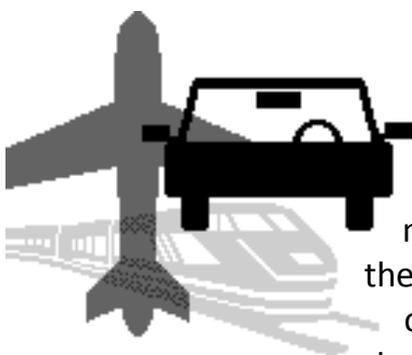
DO NOT...

- Do not accept placement of a child when a DFPS caseworker calls you directly. Inform them that you may be able to take the placement, however all placements have to be arranged through TFI. As a precaution, notify your case manager when you receive a call such as this, as it occurs more than it should.
- Do not accept placement of a child until you are sure you can meet his/her needs. Sometimes the Department does not discuss visitation expectations, etc., and if providing such transportation is not within your capacity to handle, do not commit to taking that child.
- Do not accept placement of a child without confirming that a child will adhere to your specific house rules which could cause problems at the time of placement. For example, if a child wears baggy clothes and this is not acceptable in your home, graciously decline the placement. It prevents future problems with the child and the Department from escalating.
- Do not leave the medical/dental/optical forms at the doctor's office; instead, give them to your TFI case manager. Many doctor's receptionists will offer to send the forms to the State agency for

you. Politely insist on taking the completed forms with you, as TFI (being a private contract agency) needs to keep copies of these forms in the child's file.

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS

If you are going out-of-town with a foster child, you will need to ensure that your TFI case manager is aware of the trip. If your family will be making an overnight trip out of state, you will need written permission from your DFPS case worker as well as the court, in order to take the child with you. Notification must also be given to the DFPS if the foster child will be out of the foster parent's home for any length of time. Aside from emergency travel, such as due to a death in the family (in which case phone authorization can usually be obtained), you need to give your TFI case manager as much notice as possible (two weeks), so that we can obtain the authorization from the DFPS for you prior to any trip which will be longer than 72 hours. Your TFI case manager will need to know the dates of your departure and return, as well as your itinerary including addresses and phone numbers.



TIP:

Be sure to take the authorization with you in addition to copies of your contracts, the child's Medicaid card, and any information you have regarding the child's medical history and current medications. Also take along a list of emergency numbers for TFI, the county agency, and the child's doctors. If an emergency does occur, follow the same procedure as is described in the front of this handbook.

REMINDER:

Keep in mind that many foster children have never been on a family vacation before. While travel can be a wonderful experience for a foster child, be aware that anxiety about the trip may result in some behavior problems. A good way to minimize acting-out is to talk with the child about the trip, encouraging them to ask any questions or share any concerns they may have.

RESPITE

While we encourage you as our foster parent to involve your foster child in every aspect of family life, we also support your need to take time for yourself, your spouse, and your own children by offering respite care. If you are in need of respite, please let your TFI case manager know as soon as possible or at least three weeks in advance. Foster parents are allowed to utilize fellow TFI homes as respite provided they have enough room as outlined on their verification certificate. Regarding payment for the respite, private financial arrangements are made between the two families. Regardless of how the respite family is paid, the TFI case manager assigned to the child must be notified prior to any child going on respite.

Foster parents may also utilize foster parents licensed outside of TFI, provided TFI receives prior notification that the particular family is in good standing with their respective agency. In this case, TFI foster parents make their own financial arrangements with that family and TFI is not a part of the payment arrangement. Remember to give the child's medications, medical card, and consent forms to the respite foster parent when the child goes to the home. Alternately, if you are interested in providing respite care in your home for other foster children, let either the placement coordinator or your TFI case manager know.

When a child finishes a respite child-care placement, he may not return to respite child-care services for at least 10 days. A child may be in respite child-care services for 14 consecutive days and no more than a total of 40 days each year.



“WHAT ABOUT HOLIDAYS?”

If you will be needing respite on a holiday, we urge you to give as much advance notice as possible in order to guarantee that it can be arranged. TFI strongly encourages you to include the foster child in your family's holiday plans, as we feel that it is very important to the child's treatment and well-being. (See “Holidays and Birthdays” on page 29)



MEDICATIONS

Some therapeutic foster children take prescribed medications under the direction of a psychiatrist or physician. The medications taken for various mental and emotional disorders, called psychotropic medications, help the child to achieve greater stability and self-control. Due to the nature of these medications, it is absolutely critical that you follow these rules in dispensing and storing them:



- **NEVER** allow any child to take a medication without adult supervision.
- Keep **ALL** medications locked in a safe place that is out of reach of children and teens. **ALL** medications must be double locked and inaccessible to foster children.
- Dispense the medication to the child precisely as it was prescribed-give the exact dosage at the designated times. **Do not change the amount or time unless authorized to do so by a physician.**
- Document the listed information on the Medication Administration Log for each child. Be sure to include the signature of the person administering each dose. (Your TFI case manager will review the Medication Administration Log with you on an ongoing basis.)
- **PROMPTLY** report any refusals to take medication, any changes to medication dosages or any new medications to your TFI case manager, who may consult with clinical/medical staff as appropriate.
- Check with the child's physician/psychiatrist before giving the child an over-the-counter medication because of possible interactions with medications.
- Be sure that the child's physician knows all of the medications that the child's psychiatrist has prescribed and vice versa. In addition, be sure to inform the school nurse, hospital staff (when the child is hospitalized), and other appropriate medical personnel about the child's medications.
- **NEVER** give a child any medication that has been prescribed for someone else. Not only is this against foster parent rules, it is also illegal in any circumstance.
- Be sure that the child swallows the medication by having them open their mouth, and doing a mouth check.
- Contact the prescribing psychiatrist/physician and your TFI case manager **IMMEDIATELY** if any side effects begin to occur. If the side effects are severe, call 911 first, then contact your TFI case manager. Follow the emergency procedures in the front of this book.



DISCIPLINE

TEXAS STATE LAW

TFI uses SAMA (Safe Alternatives to Managing Aggression) which includes de-escalation and disciplinary techniques. In the interest of ensuring that all of the state rules concerning discipline are followed, we have reprinted the “Agency Policy on Use of Physical Punishment” from the Texas DFPS. As with this entire handbook, you are responsible for knowing and adhering to all of the DFPS rules listed here:

“Agency Policy on Use of Physical Punishment”

It is the position of the DFPS that discipline is an educational process by which children are assisted to develop the self-control and self-direction necessary to assume responsibilities, make daily living decisions and learn to live in conformity with accepted levels of social behavior.

Most children in out-of-home care have been abused, neglected, emotionally maltreated, exploited or sexually abused. Foster parents need to recognize that most foster children expect to be treated harshly and may misbehave purposely to elicit harsh treatment from their care providers. It is imperative that foster parents learn the distinction between the discipline needs of foster children and their own children, and that they consult with the Department when they become frustrated in their discipline efforts.

Foster parents are expected to treat and discipline children with kindness and understanding and to establish well-defined rules which set the expectations and limits of behavior. They are to teach and train each child with techniques that stress praise and encouragement, and are not to subject children to verbal abuse, derogatory remarks about themselves and family members or threats of removal from the foster home. Because many foster children have been abandoned or may hurt themselves when alone, separation from others (or time out) is to be used with caution. The social worker can provide information about the child’s history to assist in determining the most appropriate use of “time out”.

Because of their histories of abuse and maltreatment, the following forms of punishment shall **NOT** be used by the foster parent:

- * Cruel, severe, bizarre, or humiliating actions
- * Spanking or hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body
- * Denial of food, clothing, or shelter
- * Denial of visits, telephone or mail contact with family
- * Assignment of extremely strenuous exercise or work
- * Confining a child to a room that may be expected to cause physical or emotional discomfort to a child
- * Confinement of a child for periods longer than those appropriate to the child.

****Punishment for bedwetting or actions in regard to toilet training are also not allowed, nor shall foster parents delegate or permit punishment of a foster child by another child.**

CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FORM

TFI is committed to providing youth with the guidance and support necessary for a safe and nurturing alternative home situation leading to successful permanent placement or emancipation, and productive adulthood. To this end, your TFI case manager will present and explain the Client Rights and Responsibilities Form to each child in placement and their foster parents. This form, which will be signed by youth and foster parent, spells out the rights guaranteed by law to the foster child. It also states our expected commitment of the foster child to take responsibility for themselves and their actions.

Clients Rights Include (these are rights that you cannot keep from the child):

1. Children must not be abused or neglected.
2. Children must have the opportunity for sibling visits and contact when a sibling group is not placed in the same home or facility.
3. Children must have an appropriate education.
4. Children must have an opportunity to participate in community functions and in recreational activities, and to have their social needs met.
5. Children's mail (including electronic mail), incoming and outgoing, must not be opened or read and children's telephone calls, incoming and outgoing, must not be monitored by the agency foster group home unless the need for such restriction is determined by the child-placing agency's level I child-placing staff. Reasons for any restrictions on mail or telephone calls and the mail or calls so restricted must be documented in the child's record. If restrictions continue longer than one month, level I child-placing staff must re-evaluate the restrictions at least monthly. Reasons for the continued restriction must be explained to the child and documented in the child's record.
8. Physical punishment must not be used with any child placed in foster care.
9. If a child is restricted to a foster home for more than 24 hours, the restrictions must be recorded in the child's record.
10. No child of any age shall ever be shaken.

Children are also advised at the time of placement of the possibility of being restrained. You will be provided with proper, safe techniques on restraining a child prior to having a child placed in your home.

ALLEGATIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS

All representatives of TFI (including foster parents) are required to report any and all allegations of abuse and neglect against a foster child. This requirement states that any individual who knows that a child under the age of 18 years of age (or 21 if the child is physically or mentally handicapped) has suffered or faces the threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect, shall not fail to immediately report or cause reports to be made to the appropriate agency.

TFI will report all known or suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate county agency that has custody of the child, regardless if the abuse is past or present. Any information that is relevant must be reported.

The primary responsibility for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect is the TFI case manager in collaboration with the Regional Director and/or the Executive Director of TFI. The TFI case manager will immediately investigate and gather any and all pertinent information available. This will be reported through both personal contact as well as written report (Serious Incident Report) to the placing agency. The county agency will then be in charge of the investigation. It will be their determination as to whether the allegation has merit and whether they will continue the investigation.

If the allegation involves your foster home, the treatment team may or may not decide to remove the child from your home. The decision to move a child will be based on both yours and the child's best interests.

RULES VIOLATIONS

All foster parents will be held responsible for all state requirements as described in the Texas Child Placing Agency Minimum Standards. In addition, the foster caregiver must meet all policies and requirements established by TFI. Failure to comply by these guidelines could result in, but not be limited to:

1. Written documentation of the incident and/or rule violation in the foster parent file.
2. A formal developmental, safety or corrective action plan.
3. In situations where there are serious offenses or repeated violations, TFI may limit additional placements or completely remove all foster children from the home.
4. TFI may choose to close your home or request that you transfer to another agency.



TFI AND FOSTER PARENT ROLES

TFI staff and foster parents have clearly defined roles that are different from each other. Each role must be fulfilled for foster children to receive optimum care and have their needs met.

TFI Staff Roles:

- A staff person will visit your home at least once a month.
- Staff will help enroll the child in therapy when needed.
- Staff will request necessary documentation to help a child therapeutically.
- Staff should be the main contact for the guardian / State Case Worker.
- Staff are there to support you as try to meet the therapeutic needs of a foster child.
- Staff are responsible for treatment planning for a foster child.

Foster Parent Roles:

- Foster Parents provide food, clothing, shelter, and allowance to foster children.
- Foster parents provide transportation including appointments for foster children.
- Foster parents participate in the treatment planning and other therapeutic interventions needed for a foster child.
- Foster parents communicate with TFI all information regarding a foster child's behavior and current needs.
- Foster parents communicate first with TFI and second with a State Worker. In the event the foster parent talks with the State Worker, be sure and communicate exactly what was discussed with your TFI case manager.
- Foster parents keep up on paperwork including weekly behavior logs, and medications documentation.

TFI expects all foster parents to communicate with their TFI workers on a weekly basis and more if necessary. If an incident occurs with a foster child foster parents need to call the emergency cell phone or their case worker directly. Information regarding a child's behavior or past must be reported to a TFI worker as soon as possible. If a TFI case manager cannot visit your home in a given week they will call you and have a conversation concerning the foster child.

Support Services Offered by TFI

- Respite care is offered on an as needed basis, when available and is discussed elsewhere in this book.
- There is an emergency cell phone that is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

GENERAL CARE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

AN OVERALL PRINCIPLE:

While foster children in some ways are radically different than your own children (disabilities, issues, background, treatment needs, and discipline rules to name just a few), it is absolutely essential that you, as a foster parent, keep in mind one important idea. A foster child should never be made to feel like an “outsider” in your home, or that they are somehow “less” than the other children in the home. It goes without saying that we do not expect you to have the same feelings for them as your own children (they are not), nor should you assign the same level of trust to them (they require much more supervision). What we do expect is that the child will not be belittled, segregated, or limited in any way that is demeaning or that makes them feel as if they are not a welcome part of your family. You are responsible to look after the child’s mental, physical, and emotional needs as if they are one of your own children. Some particulars of these responsibilities are listed in this section.

TRANSPORTATION

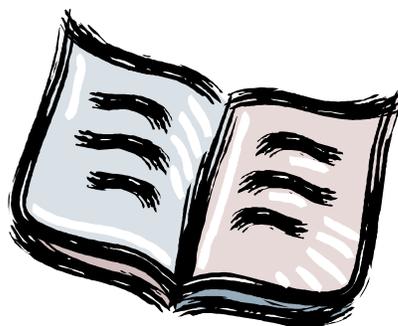
Foster parents are responsible for ensuring that foster children attend all required appointments, such as visits, school, therapy and medical appointments, and employment. It is important that you find out all of the child’s transportation needs **BEFORE** placement, so that you can be sure that you can meet those needs. For TFI’s reimbursement policy regarding transportation, please see the appropriate section under “Reimbursement” starting on page 11.

SCHOOL

Most of the children in our care have special needs when it comes to their education-both behaviorally and academically. Some of our children have a history of poor school behaviors and truancy. Many are in specialized programs due to learning disabilities or are in a grade level much younger than their age due to failing marks. It is important that you become familiar with your foster child’s needs and the program in which they are enrolled. This includes keeping in regular contact with their teachers, especially in attending school meetings, IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. The stronger the communication is between you and the school’s faculty, the better your child’s chances will be of succeeding academically. **PLEASE BE SURE THAT YOU SHOW ALL OF YOUR CHILD’S OFFICIAL SCHOOL DOCUMENTS (report cards, interim reports, IEP’s, disciplinary notices, etc.) TO YOUR TFI CASE MANAGER.**

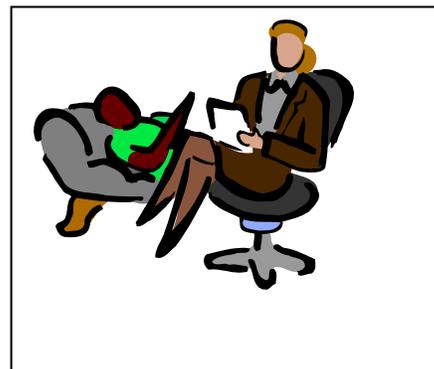
SCHOOL TIP:

In some cases, a foster child is embarrassed by having poor academic performance, which accounts for a large part of their poor attitude and behavior in school. A good idea is to make it a point to spend time each day with your foster child, going over their assignments and helping them study for tests. This should be done in a manner that builds up the child, keeping in mind their needs and limitations, instead of one that tears them down. Encouragement goes a long way toward improving a child's performance, attitude, and self-confidence. A child who has poor academic performance is made to feel "stupid" enough by their peers-they don't need to feel that way at home.

**THERAPY**

As a therapeutic foster parent, you will rarely have a child in your home that does not require some kind of therapy. This may be any combination of counseling, play therapy, art therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and many others and may take place on an individual, group, and/or family level. It is of vital importance to your child's care that you and the therapist are able to communicate frequently and openly about the child's progress and needs. Therefore, it is necessary for at least one foster parent to accompany the child to the sessions on a regular basis. At the same time, you need to understand that when it comes to what the child specifically shares with the therapist during the sessions, you are on a "need to know" basis. In other words, due to strict confidentiality laws, the therapist can only share with you information that is necessary to the child's treatment.

If you have any questions regarding this issue, please speak with your TFI case manager.



MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

In addition to taking your foster child to the doctor when they are sick, you will also need to take them for their regular medical examinations. Unless current documentation is provided at the time of placement or shortly thereafter, foster children are to have initial medical exams **within 30 days of placement**. **Physicals are required yearly. Dental exams must be scheduled within the first 30 days of placement, but may take place up to 90 days out from the date of placement. They are required every 6 months for children older than 3.** As Medicaid will not pay for additional “well-child” exams and semi-annual dental checkups, please remain in close contact with your TFI case manager as to any problems in scheduling these appointments. Unless the DFPS specifies a particular doctor or dentist, you may use your family physician and dentist (provided they accept Medicaid). In the event your foster child wears glasses, or if he or she is in need of an optical examination to get new glasses, please notify your TFI case manager so that you will have the Optical Form for such an appointment. Inform your child’s doctor/dentist/optometrist of any medications that the child is taking in addition to any known medication allergies, as the doctor/dentist/optometrist will need this information when prescribing additional medications for them. **Whenever you take the child to a medical appointment, be sure that you notify your TFI case manager promptly, and that you give the TFI case manager a copy of the examination form.**

HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS

We expect at no other time during the year will your foster child feel either less or more of a part of your family than on holidays and especially their birthday. If there is a significant difference between the way you treat your own children and the way you treat the foster child, it is most apparent on these that you will budget money from your per diem check to buy birthday and holiday gifts for your foster child. In an effort to not make the foster children feel different than other children, it is TFI’s policy to not purchase their gifts for you, nor to have a separate holiday party for the foster children. While we understand that you may need respite care during the holidays (holiday respite needs to be requested well in advance in order to guarantee that it can be arranged), we strongly encourage you to include your foster child in your holiday plans and activities. Holidays and birthdays can be the most painful times for foster children, as they often feel rejected and depressed due to being separated from their own families or due to painful memories of past hurts and disappointments. (See page 13 for DFPS reimbursement discussion.)



“WHAT IF MY FOSTER CHILD IS PLACED WITH ME CLOSE TO THEIR BIRTHDAY OR HOLIDAY? HOW DO I BUY GIFTS IF I HAVEN’T RECEIVED MY FIRST CHECK?”

We will work with you depending upon the individual situation. It might be helpful to purchase miscellaneous gifts on an ongoing basis, which would be age appropriate to the age/gender of children you want placed in your home. This way the child would have something to open for their special days rather than nothing.

TIPS ON DAILY CARE

PROVIDE STABILITY & STRUCTURE

Many of our children have come from homes that were in a constant state of upheaval. TFI strongly encourages you to create a stable, structured environment, so that the child will feel comfortable in your home. It is important that all rules and consequences are clearly defined, and applied consistently. Establish regular mealtimes and snack times, so the child does not need to be anxious about if or when they can eat. Establish regular routines, such as bedtime, so the child can feel secure in the consistency of your home. Providing this stability and structure in your home is the basis of being a therapeutic foster home.

TEACH RESPONSIBILITY

TFI does not have a strict set of rules on how you should run your home. However, we do encourage you to teach responsibility to the foster children placed there. This needs to be done in an age-appropriate way. For example, if a child is old enough, they should be taught how to do their laundry and then given a day in the week in which they need to do it. Also, a child should be given age-appropriate chores to do throughout the week, enabling you to praise the child or work on the child’s ability to do a task to completion.



ALLOWANCES-PLEASE NOTE

TFI strongly discourages giving a child a large lump sum of money one time a month. This does not encourage responsibility, and it also gives the child too much money at one time that could open the doorway for problems such as money to run away, buy drugs, etc.

You can also start a savings account for the child to put their allowance in. They can take this with them when they leave TFI and this practice helps them to begin to understand the responsibility of saving money. The minimum allowance must be given to the child monthly and cannot be docked as a form of discipline. If you give over and above the minimum allowance you can dock that if a child does not follow through on their chores.

GENERAL CARE EXPENSES

It is the foster parent's responsibility to provide money for all general care expenses for the foster child. This includes personal hygiene expenses, haircuts, social activity fees, etc. **These are not to be bought by the child with their allowance.** Also, if a child's transportation is by bus, it is the foster parent's responsibility to provide bus money for all necessary transportation.

CRIBS AND CAR SEATS

We encourage you to obtain these items prior to placement of children this age in your home. On occasion, TFI may have a crib and car seat which you can borrow for thirty days if a child needing them is placed in your home and you do not have access to one. **Please be sure you have arrangements for cribs and/or car seats prior to accepting a child into your home that will need these items.**



DAMAGES CAUSED BY FOSTER CHILD

Any damages caused by a foster child are your responsibility to pay for. You can get insurance to cover these types of expenses. Talk with your homeowners' or renter's insurance carrier.

DISCHARGES

CAUTIONS

Do not call the State worker to request removal of a child from your home. This cannot be over-emphasized, as we are a contracted agency, and by that contract we are obligated to follow a process for removal, as described in the next section.

Do not threaten the child with removal as a means of discipline. This is a violation of state law and is counter-productive to the child's treatment.

Do not call the after-hours emergency number to ask for a non-emergency removal. The only way in which we remove a child from your home on an emergency basis is for behavior that is posing an imminent threat to persons or property in your home, in which case the police will most likely need to become involved. For the appropriate means of giving non-emergency notice, see step one in the next section.

Do not belittle the child over the removal. Being negative toward the foster child is considered abuse, and will be treated as such. While having a belligerent child in your home can be very stressful, it is important to remain the adult and continue to treat the child with respect and consideration, even though they may not be treating you that way. Remember--you are the professional.

GROUND RULES

NOTICE POLICY

If you feel that a child is not working out in your home, you have the right to give your TFI case manager notice that you want the child removed. This allows TFI to locate another home in our system (if appropriate) and/or enables the placing agency to secure a placement outside our system. While we will do our best to move the child as quickly as possible, you are obligated to continue to provide a home for the child until your notice is up.

At the time of verification, you will be provided a copy of the Agency Agreement, which among other things defines the length of notice required. Non-emergency removals generally require 30 days. We will consider it an emergency only in the event a child, parent or other family member is at risk of harming or being harmed if the child in question remains in the home the duration of the 30-day notice.

It is not an emergency to have a child removed if it is merely out of convenience to the foster parents. Children in the foster care system are moved frequently as it is. It is because of this that careful consideration is given to each and every placement into TFI. We feel it is a part of your agreed commitment to see a 30-day notice through on a child unless again, keeping him or her would be harmful to someone. Examples of non-emergencies would include child making threats of allegations (this is quite normal), a child not consistently following rules and a child being disrespectful to foster parents. All of these come with the territory, and it is our hope and expectation that you accept and understand this prior to becoming a TFI foster parent.

EMERGENCY REMOVALS

If a child is experiencing a medical, psychiatric or behavioral emergency which cannot be appropriately stabilized, TFI will work with medical, psychiatric and law enforcement personnel to secure a more appropriate placement as soon as possible. It is not an emergency to have a child removed if it is merely out of convenience to the foster parents. Only with a letter from a physician or an admission to a psychiatric hospital can TFI choose to give a 24-hour notice of removal.

UNPLANNED ABSENCES

In cases where a child runs away from your home (AWOL), is hospitalized, or is placed in detention, our contract with some agencies specify that the child's bed will be held for up to 10 days. Other placing agency contracts specify that a child is immediately considered discharged unless that placing agency requests in writing that we hold the bed for a specific period of time. Please consult your TFI case manager for more specific information regarding your situation. If we receive a request to hold a bed, you will generally be reimbursed at the agreed-upon per diem rate. (In the rare event that the placing agency is unwilling to reimburse TFI, we would subsequently be unable to pay you.)

CLOTHING INVENTORY

When a child leaves your home, you must complete a final clothing inventory. This allows us to confirm what items the child left your home with, as well as allows you to make sure that nothing of yours is leaving with them.



IMPORTANT REMINDER!!!!!!! It is NEVER appropriate to call the State worker to request removal of a child from your home.

DAYCARE POLICY

TFI does not provide daycare or reimbursement for a foster child to attend daycare. Foster parents are responsible for ensuring that foster children who need to attend are properly enrolled in an age-appropriate daycare. It is important that you find out all of the details of enrollment and services provided through the daycare before placement so that you can be sure that you can meet those needs. TFI is not responsible for any cost or fees involving daycare. Foster parents who work full time may on occasion utilize CCDS services for daycare age foster children. This should be arranged PRIOR to placement of a child and is not to be expected. The importance of arranging this prior to placement is to ensure that the spot for the child at the daycare is secured and that the funding is also provided through CCDS. Foster parents are **STRONGLY** advised that we will not support you giving notice on a child due to not having their daycare paid, if you accept a daycare age child without having prior daycare arrangements. Foster parents who do not work should use their monthly per diem checks to cover any daycare costs. If you have any questions about daycare services in your area or daycare related questions, please see your TFI case manager.



PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

In order to avoid and/or minimize the exposure of foster parents to blood borne pathogens and infectious diseases, TFI has established the following procedures for all foster parents.



Universal Precautions should be observed at all times, including but not limited to:

- A. Consider **ALL** blood and body fluids to be potentially infectious, and avoid exposure by wearing protective clothing, such as disposable latex gloves.
- B. Dispose of all sharp items (i.e. needles, syringes, etc.) in a safe manner. Handle such items with caution, wearing disposable gloves. It would be wise to purchase “sharps dispensers”, which will contain both the new and the used needles safely.
- C. Teach your family members, including the foster child, to observe these precautions at all times.

TFI will share all known medical information with foster parents upon the child’s admission, including information about children who may have infectious diseases, or other diagnosed medical conditions, which require special care or precautions.

In the event that anyone in your household has been exposed to any blood borne pathogens, you should immediately follow the emergency procedures on page 2.

ROLES OF FOSTER PARENTS AND TFI

TFI – TFI will in all cases require adherence to agency policies and procedures, and state and county regulations. In these cases, foster parents are not allowed choice but must follow the guidelines.

1. These areas include medical issues, legal issues, visitation with natural families, school issues, supervision requirements, home maintenance and safety requirements, clothing inventory requirements, maintaining lifebooks, transportation responsibilities, arranging and attending therapeutic and medical appointments, maintaining required communication, Attention to individual needs of the child with regard to cultural and religious events and entertainment, arranging for approved alternative care providers, maintaining confidentiality, training requirements for foster parents, behavior intervention requirements, reporting requirements, medication issues, all aspects of the child’s individual plan as determined by the child’s treatment team, affirmative parenting skills and all determinations made by involved professionals with regard to the individual child’s treatment.
2. General guidelines can be found in the Foster Parent Handbook.
3. All aspects of these requirements should be covered in the pre-service training.

Foster Parent - The foster parent is allowed choice in the types and nature of the children placed in his home, after agency guidelines have been met. He is allowed choice in each individual placement offered to his home and may, with specific request and disruption criteria in place, determine when the child is required to leave his home.

1. The foster parent may make choices in the manner in which his home is run, after agency guidelines have been met. The foster parent may make rules for his home and establish consequences within the behavior intervention guidelines and the child’s abilities and needs within his individual plan. The foster parent may chose the level of housekeeping and maintenance after agency guidelines have been followed, and child space and storage issues have been maintained. The foster parents may choose the style of parenting that he offers, recognizing that foster children are not their own children and require attention to their specific issues and needs.
 - a. TFI does not prescribe the manner in which the foster parent “parents” the child, as this is not an institutional setting but a home. Day to day decisions may be made by the foster parent, including the nutritious meals he serves, bedtimes and activities of the family.
 - b. Families are expected to involve the child and not single him out as “foster” whenever possible; families make their choices of how to do this.

Joint decisions- Almost every aspect of the child’s life benefits from discussion with his treatment team and the TFI case manager.

- a. In the case manager’s weekly visits, all of the aspects of the child’s plan and activities will be discussed to establish that his plan and best interests are maintained.
- b. Issues of quality assurance will be discussed, to allow correction of poor areas and improvement where needed.
- c. Joint decisions curtail corrective actions and dismissal of foster parents.

TRAINING

The specific training requirements are specified in the related policy.

- a. TFI will provide all training necessary for pre-service and annual requirement at cost of the agency. Multiple times and locations are offered as the office growth allows for foster parent convenience. Exception: issues specific to the child requiring individualized instruction from outside professionals will be offered by those sources. This will also be at no cost to the foster parent.
- b. Should the foster parent decide to obtain education at another source meeting the requirements for training, he will be expected to bear the cost himself.
- c. If the state or county provides reimbursement, TFI will offer this to foster parents; otherwise, there will be no reimbursement for required trainings.
- d. There will be no reimbursement for typical travel costs or child care costs; these are requirements of the foster parent.

COMMUNICATION

TFI case managers will visit the child and foster parent, generally at least twice per month. This is the best venue for communication wherein all aspects of the child's care and planning can be accomplished.

- a. TFI will communicate with the foster parents through the case manager on typical concerns, and the foster parent can make his issues known to TFI through the case manager.
- b. Foster parents are required to report any issues or suspected issues such as critical or unusual incidents or emergent concerns; these will be required to be reported immediately.
- c. During regular office hours, the foster parent can contact his case manager or the case manager on duty at the office number. After hours, the case manager may be reached at his home; should he not be available, there will be an on-call emergency number staffed by a TFI case manager who will assist the foster parent with reporting emergency issues.
- d. If the foster parent has an issue with the case manager, he will be given the name and phone number of the supervisory Regional Director to contact.
- e. All offices will be staffed with a receptionist (as their size allows) to facilitate communication with the TFI offices.
- f. If issues require reporting to the placing agency, TFI will receive the report from the foster parent, and make the required report to the placing agency. Foster parents will not contact the placing agency directly, unless specifically requested.

FINANCIAL REIMBURSEMENT

TFI will present the amount of the per diem rates designated as foster parent reimbursement at the time of verification. This information will be made part of the Agency Agreement and signed by all parties.

- a. TFI reimburses foster parents monthly, typically on the 10th and 22nd of each month. The specifics will be discussed with parents during pre-service training and any required changes communicated in writing. Since stubs and checks are mailed directly to the home, they arrive sometime after the 10th or 22nd of each month.

- b. Direct deposit is available and foster parents will be offered the forms necessary for this at the time of the home's verification.

PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

Within the scope of agency regulations concerning the specifics of the children who can be placed in each specific home, and given the placing agency requests for the issues of each child, TFI will offer pre-selected foster parents the right to choose who is placed within their home.

- a. All the information offered to TFI will be shared with the foster family so that they can make an informed decision.
- b. If it can be arranged, pre-placement visits can be made, but foster parents will be made aware that limited determinations can be made in the artificiality of such a visit.
- c. TFI placement staff and case manager assigned to the case will assist the foster parent and the child with the transition as their needs dictate.

SUPPORT SERVICES

TFI's primary support is the close contact and support of the case manager assigned to the case. This support may take the form of counseling, referral, training in specific topics, and any other support the case manager and treatment team can offer to stabilize the placement.

- a. Foster parent annual trainings offer an opportunity to address issues in the foster homes for more support and understanding.
- b. All administrative staff are available for reinforcement to assist the foster parent in successfully parenting a child.
- c. Also available is respite within the TFI system. TFI will arrange approved respite situations between foster parents who will be prepared for the child to be cared for in their homes. The respite foster parent will receive the per diem of the parent with whom the child is placed for the time period he is out of that home unless financial arrangements are mutually agreed upon between the two families. TFI will manage the transfer of these payments and the oversight of the respite situation.

INFORMATION SHARING

TFI will share with parents considering a placement all the information received from the placing agency. If information is received that is not relevant to the placement (for example, issues in a previous foster home causing the child's removal that were not the actions of the child) that information would not be shared.

- a. Any information received about the child and his issues after the placement is made will be shared with the foster parent.
- b. All relevant information will be shared with respite parents. Not all information known about the youth may be relevant in a short term respite situation.
- c. TFI will not share information about a child with his former foster parents. If that child requests contact with former foster parents, his placing agency case worker and treatment team will make the decision that TFI will facilitate that contact.
- d. Foster parents will be instructed not to share information about their places foster children among themselves to avoid breaching confidentiality.

- e. As stated previously, the foster parent will be responsible for sharing all information relevant about the child in the visits of the case manager, and will contact the office or emergency line immediately for serious issues and critical incidents. In medical or other emergencies, 911 will be the first call, and when the situation is stabilized, a call to TFI must be made. Critical and emergency information must be made as soon as possible following the incident, and in no case may be longer than 24 hours of the incident. When in doubt as to whether or not a situation is critical, the foster parent will be instructed to call and allow the case manager or on-call case manager to decide.

PARTICIPATION IN THE TREATMENT PROCESS

TFI considers foster parents to be a vital part of the treatment team of professionals.

- a. Parents must attend the monthly treatment team meetings and respond to those issues relevant to the child and his plan.
- b. The implementation of the plan rests in large degree upon the foster parent for its day-to-day management, although case managers support both the foster parent and the youth within the scope of the process.
- c. Much is required of foster parents as professionals in their training, in the management of their homes and in their responsibilities, making them equals with other treatment team professionals, and worthy of respect and input.

