**TFI Family Connections LLC**

# Child Handbook to Bridge Foster Care





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**Introduction**

TFI Family Connections LLC would like for your foster care experience to be helpful for you and your family. The job of TFI Family Connections LLC is to assure you have a safe and healthy environment in which to live in until permanency is possible.

 This handbook was developed to help answer some of the questions you may have while placed in foster care. This guide will help give definitions and clear descriptions of services TFI Family Connections LLC will provide for you. You are the most important person, and while you are in foster care, the goal is to make sure you receive services that will help you. The handbook is made especially for you so you will know what to expect. Take some time to read this handbook, and please feel free to ask any questions you might still have. Your Foster Care Worker, Permanency Worker and/or your resource parents should be able to answer any questions you may have.



**General Information**



This section will provide helpful information to you such as what is TFI Family Connections LLC, what role workers have in your case, and how to reach your workers, etc.

### DD01184_ What is TFI Family Connections LLC?

### TFI Family Connections LLC is a not for profit Social Service Agency providing Foster Care and Behavioral Health services in Oklahoma. We recruit, train, support and monitor foster homes.

**Helpful Terms**

Below we have provided a section of terms you may not understand but often hear. We have provided definitions of those words to help you in reading this handbook:

**DHS** – Department of Human Services

**Custody –** A decision by the Court regarding who will take care of you, provide you with a place to live, and make sure that you are safe and healthy.

**Permanency –** To have a placement that does not change, to have someplace that you will live continuously

**Reintegration** – Reunite you with your family

**Grievance** – A situation or concern that is thought to be unjust and a complaint is filed

**Confidentiality** – Everything about your case is confidential and will not be shared with people other than those that are involved in your case. If you tell something to your social workers, or your therapists this will be kept in trust and considered confidential.

### DD01184_ Roles of All the Workers Involved

The **DHS Permanency Worker** works very closely with your family to help them in meeting the case plan goal. You will have monthly face-to-face contact with your worker to discuss the status and progress made on the case. The worker also meets monthly with your parents to discuss the progress your family is making on the case plan (when case plan goal is to return you home). This worker will be assigned to your case no matter what resource home you live in.

The **Foster Care Worker** is the worker assigned to work with your resource home. This worker will ensure that your resource parents have everything they need in order to assist you during your time in foster care. These workers also visit with you face-to-face each month to follow-up with you about your case. If you move to a different resource home, chances are you will have a different worker assigned to that resource home.

**Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)** is a trained volunteer who is appointed by the district court to represent the best interests of the child. A CASA is in the unique position of being an advocate for you and of being an independent investigator. With the appointment comes the responsibility of reporting their findings and recommendations to the court. Not all children or District Courts have CASA volunteers. You may not have a CASA volunteer appointed to your case.

**Guardian ad Litem (GAL)** is the attorney assigned by the court to serve as your legal representative on your case. The GAL is the attorney for you and will ensure you have proper representation before the court. Your parents may hire their own attorney to represent them, if they wish. The GAL often times participates in meetings regarding your case and provides valuable legal feedback for the case.

**Reaching your Foster Care Worker**

 **Regular Contact**

TFI Family Connections LLC offices are open from 8:00 am-5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Some smaller offices are closed during the lunch hour.

You can leave a message on the office voice mail after work hours. Voice mail may also pick up if workers are out of office and/or all phone lines are busy at the time you call. Office voice mail messages are checked in the morning and after lunch. Please leave your name, phone number, worker’s name and what you are calling about. The worker that you left a message for will then return your call as soon as they are available (generally within two working days of their return to the office).

 **Emergency Situations**

In times of emergency incidents, TFI Family Connections LLC has an emergency number that is responded to 24 hours a day to meet your needs. Both your parents and your resource parents have access to this number so that they can help you if an emergency situation arises. Concerns about visitation, physical needs, school issues or other issues that are not emergencies should be addressed to the DHS Permanency Worker the following business day and not through the emergency hotline.

The TFI Afterhours and Emergency Hotline number is 1-877-921-4114.

***Your Rights***



While in foster care, you have certain rights. You have a right to confidentiality, to privacy, to voice concerns, etc. This section will provide an explanation of your rights.

 **Confidentiality**

 Being in foster care can be a very difficult time and it can be embarrassing. You may not want everyone to know about your situation or that you are in foster care. TFI Family Connections LLC will work to ensure that information about you and your family remains private and confidential. While you are in DHS custody, your Permanency Worker and your Foster Care Worker are gathering information about you and your family. They will need to know about your physical health, educational needs, and mental health. Some of the information will be gathered from and shared with others who have treated, evaluated, or provided care to you or your family, including information such as school records, medical records, therapy reports, etc. This information will help TFI Family Connections LLC, and those individuals providing services to you, provide the best care to you and your family.

At TFI Family Connections LLC, we work to ensure only the people that know the details of your case are the people that are helping to make sure you receive the best care possible and can assist you in going home. Your workers will not share information about you with friends of your family or your neighbors. Your case file is private and information from that file is shared only on a need to know basis with those people involved in your case, as agreed to by your parents by their signature on a Consent Form, and we only provide the minimum information necessary for those individuals requesting information about your case. A law called the **H**ealth **I**nsurance **P**ortability and **A**ccountability **A**ct of 1996 (**HIPAA**) requires TFI to keep your information private. You and your family’s information is protected by this law, because federal and state medical funding helps supports your care while in DHS custody. You do, though, have the right to view information in your own file. To view the information in your case file, please complete the Access to Case Records Request in the Appendix of this handbook and return the form to your Foster Care Worker. There are limits to the information that you can view.

The primary people that your workers will be discussing your case with include your immediate family, your resource family, your DHS worker, your Guardian ad Litem, and your therapist or counselor. Also, staff members from TFI Family Connections LLC Quality Improvement Department or Licensing Department may review your file for auditing purposes. Plus, it is possible for the court to request to review your file.

If you have any concerns about with whom your information is being shared, please feel free to talk to your Permanency Worker or Foster Care Worker about who has access to your information. For more detail, please refer to the Notice of Privacy Practices in the Appendix section of this Handbook.

**Privacy**

 Even though you are not living in your parents’ home, you do still have a right to privacy. Unless there is a concern about your well-being and your Permanency Worker and their Supervisor have approved it, your resource family and your workers should not read through your mail or listen to your phone calls. You have a right to have private conversations and mail, even though you are living in another person’s home. If it is determined by your Permanency Worker and their Supervisor, that the mail or phone calls you receive should be monitored; your Permanency Worker will explain the concerns to you and the restrictions. If you believe that your resource family is violating your right to privacy, please discuss your concerns with your Foster Care Worker.

**Other Rights**

In addition, you have the right to practice your own cultural and religious beliefs. While you do not have to follow the cultural and religious beliefs of your resource family, you do need to be respectful of their beliefs, just as they should be respectful of yours. If you have any concerns about the freedom to practice your own cultural and religious beliefs, please discuss them with your Foster Care Worker.

 Also, even though you are living in another person’s home, the resource family or other foster children do not have the right to use your things without your permission. Your clothes, your CDs, your video games, etc. are your belongings. Although it is always nice to share, other people should not be using your belongings without your permission. If you have sentimental or valuable items that you are not sure where they can be stored for safe keeping, discuss this with your resource parent or Foster Care Worker. If you are having problems with other foster children or the resource family’s biological children using your belongings without permission, talk to your resource parent about the problem. If that does not solve the problem, talk to your Foster Care Worker about the situation.

**Expressing Concerns (Grievance Policy)**

 Being a child in foster care, you may sometimes feel as though you don’t have any control over your case or situation. You are always welcome to voice your opinion with your resource family and your workers. Sometimes, though, you may feel as though you are not being treated fairly. If you feel as though your resource family is not treating you fairly, please talk about the problem with your resource family first. If the problem still occurs, discuss the problem with your Foster Care Worker and they will assist you. If you feel that your Foster Care Worker is not treating you fairly and you have tried to talk to your workers about the problem and the situation is not getting better, you can contact the Concern Line at TFI Family Connections LLC. You can call toll-free at 877-942-2239 or if you have access to the internet, you can also e-mail your problem to ConcernLine@tfifamily.org. Someone not involved in your case will review your concern. They will contact the director of your area to find out more information about your concern. The director will contact you within 5 working days to discuss the problem with you to see if the problem can be solved. Please try to resolve the problem with the worker yourself first, though, before you resort to using the Concern Line.

***Appendix***



Attached are beneficial forms and information that will be helpful to you and your family

Children’s Rights

The rights of children listed below were taken from the OKDHS publication Licensing Requirements for Child

Placing Agencies, as well as COA and these rights ensure children in out-of-home care are:

• able to receive fair and equitable treatment in the receipt of services, as well as enforcement of policies and rules.

• communicated with in the language the child understands, as well as to receive adaptive communication techniques or devices to facilitate communication.

• enabled to participate in decisions about their care, in compliance with state and federal regulations.

* not forced to participate in publicity or promotional activities.

• not publicly identified to their embarrassment as wards of the agency.

• provided an opportunity to participate in religious services.

• supplied with facilities and supplies for personal care, hygiene and grooming.

• supplied with clothing and shoes appropriate to the season, age, activities and individual needs and are comparable to that of other children in the community.

• provided space in the resource home for the child’s personal possessions and for a reasonable degree of privacy.

• the right to bring, possess, and acquire personal belongings subject only to reasonable household rules and the child’s service plan.

• given their personal belongings when the child leaves the home.

• expected to perform only household tasks that are within the child’s abilities, reasonable for the child’s age and similar to those expected of other household members of comparable age and ability.

• given guidance in managing their own money.

(A) Money earned by the child or received as a gift or allowance is the child’s personal property.

(B) The child is not required to use earned money to pay for room and board, unless it is a part of the service

plan and approved by the parent or custodian and OKDHS.

• allowed privacy in writing, sending or receiving correspondence unless restricted by the service plan.

• not denied meals as punishment.

• not subjected to remarks that belittle or ridicule the child or the child’s family.

• allowed to visit with the child’s family, in accordance with the service plan.

• not forced to acknowledge dependency on OKDHS or resource home or acknowledge gratitude to them.

• given the opportunity, at the child’s request or OKDHS’ request, for private conversation with OKDHS’ staff

members who are responsible for the child’s supervision.

• provided educational opportunities in accordance with the child’s plan of care.

* able to file a grievance or complaint without interference or retaliation.
* provided regular opportunities to engage in age appropriate or developmentally appropriate activities.

**TFI Family Connections LLC NOTICE *OF PRIVACY PRACTICES***

This notice describes how information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

Privacy is a very important concern for all those who come to TFI Family Connections LLC for services. It is also complicated because of federal and state laws and our profession. Because the rules are so complicated some parts of this Notice are quite detailed and you probably will have to read them several times to understand. If you have any questions our Privacy Officer will be happy to help you. Your Foster Care Worker or Resource Parent can provide you with the contact information for TFI Family Connections LLC Privacy Officer.

**A. Introduction To Our Clients**

This notice will tell you about how we handle information about you. It tells how we use this information in our office, how we share it with other professionals and organizations, and how you can see it. We want you to know all of this so that you can make the best decisions for yourself. We are also required to tell you about this because of the privacy regulations of a federal law, the **H**ealth **I**nsurance **P**ortability and **A**ccountability **A**ct of 1996 (**HIPAA**). Because this law and the laws of Oklahoma are very complicated, we have simplified some parts. If you have any questions or want to know more about anything in this Notice, please ask our Privacy Officer for more explanation or more details, or feel free to talk to your worker.

**B. What We Mean By Your Information**

Each time we meet with you or a member of your family, we are collecting information about you and your well-being. Much of this information is related to your physical, medical, educational, emotional, and mental health status from the past, present or future. Information collected can also be relating to payment for care and services provided treatment or other services you received from an affiliate agency or us. This information goes into your case file at the office. In the office this **P**rotected **H**ealth **I**nformation (**PHI**) is likely to include the following kinds of information:

* Your family history (you and each family member) will include family information, marital history of your parents, past services received, your parents’ work experience and skill level, educational information, relationship with extended family, support systems, past allegations, past charges or convictions, or diagnosis.
* Reasons you were referred, individual and family strengths, needs, goals, tasks, progress toward goals and tasks.
* Treatment plans and/or case plans.
* Records we get from others who treated, evaluated or provided care for you or your family members (reports, school records, medical records, test results, etc.).
* Progress notes are individualized notes that workers make after all contacts with you or others that work with you that describe what was discussed and what was observed.
* Reports on incidents that have generally occurred with children in custody such as injury, behavior or conduct concern, or allegations.
* Insurance billing information (placement agreements, authorizations).
* Legal documents (court report, court order and journal entry).

This list is just to give you an idea about what types of information will be kept in a file (record) about you. There may be other kinds of information that will be in your clinical file. You will also find consents and authorizations that legal guardian and clients sign to allow professionals to share information in order to work with your family most effectively. Other reports and assessment tools are also completed to assure that those providers working with us have enough information and we are making all necessary referrals needed to work with you and your family.

**C. Privacy and the Laws**

The HIPAA law requires us to keep your family’s information private and to give you this notice of our legal duties and our privacy practices, which is called the Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP). We will obey the rules of this notice as long it continues to meet with the requirements of the current laws. If the laws change, and/or we need to change the rules of the notice to follow the current law, the new NPP will apply to all the information we keep. If we change the NPP we will post the new Notice in our office and our web site at www.tfifamily.org.

**D. How your Protected Health Information can be Used and Shared**

When others read your information in the agency that is called by law **“use”.** If the information is shared with or sent to persons outside this agency, that is called by law, “**disclosure”.** Except in some special circumstances, when we use your protected information here or disclose it to others we share only the **minimum amount of information necessary** needed for the purpose.

**1. Uses and Disclosures of Information with Your Consent**

Your parents will be asked to sign a separate **Consent form** to allow us to use and share only the minimum necessary. In almost all cases we intend to use your information here or share your information with other people or organizations to provide **Treatment** to you, arrange for **Payment** for our services, or some other business functions call health care **Operations** (providing needed safety information).

**1a. For Treatment, Payment or Health Care Operations**:

If a child is in state custody and the Court has determined that a department (DHS or JJA) of the state has legal custody of the child, then the state department responsible for the care of that child can provide us with consent to provide treatment. This means that if your parents refuse treatment, we may ask the State department that currently has custody of you to provide consent to treat you. We prefer however, that your parents’ consent for us to provide care and treatment for you.

*For Treatment.* We use or disclose your information to provide you and your family with the services needed and identified in your case plan/treatment plan. These treatment services can include: mental health services, drug and alcohol services, housing or domestic services, placement services, vocational services, educational services and medical services.

*For Payment.* We may use or disclose your information to bill your parents’ private insurance, client medical card, your parents’ directly, or the State of Oklahoma (DHS or JJA) for services provided.

*For Health Care Operations.*

We may use or disclose your information to see where we can make improvements in the care and services that we provide.

**1b. Other Uses in Healthcare**

*Phone Calls and Written Correspondence*. We may use and disclose information to reschedule, remind you of appointments, notify you of incidents, request surveys for treatment or other care.

*Treatment Alternatives.* We may use and disclose your information to tell you about or recommend possible treatment or alternatives or other health-related benefits that may be of interest to you.

*Research*. We may use or share your information to do research to improve treatments. In all cases your name, address and other information that reveals who you are will be removed from the information given to researchers.

*Audits*. Internal and external agency case file audits may randomly occur. The auditor will have access briefly to all of your information and is bound by confidentiality not to reveal any information they read to any other person.

*Business Associates*. There are some jobs we hire other businesses to do for us. They are called our Business Associates by law. Examples include transport drivers. These business associates may need to receive some of your information to do their jobs properly, but they are bound by confidentiality.

**2. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Your Authorization**

If we want to use your information for any purpose besides treatment, payment, and other benefits/services, or those we described above we need your parents’ permission on an Authorization form. We don’t expect to need this very often.

If your parents’ do authorize us to use or disclose your information, your parents’ can revoke (cancel) that permission, in writing, at any time. After that time we will not use or disclose your information for the purposes that we agreed to. Of course, we cannot take back any information we had already disclosed with your permission or that we had used in our office.

**3. Uses and Disclosures of Information from Clinical Files not requiring Consent or Authorization**

The laws let us use and disclose some of your information without your consent or authorization in some cases.

*When required by law.* There are some federal, state, or local laws, which require us to disclose information.

* We have to report suspected child abuse or neglect.
* If you are involved in a lawsuit or legal proceeding and we receive a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process we may have to release some of your information.
* We have to disclose some information to the government agencies, which check on us to see that we are obeying the privacy laws or with which we have a contract to provide services.

*For Law Enforcement Purposes*. To investigate any crimes

*For public health activities.* To agencies which investigate disease or injuries.

*For specific government functions.* To military personnel, veterans, worker’s compensations or correctional facilities.

*To Prevent a Serious Threat to Health or Safety*  to yourself or your family.

**4. Uses and Disclosures Requiring You to have an Opportunity to Object**

We can share some information about you with your family or others such as those involved in your care or anyone else your parents’ choose such as close friends or clergy (i.e. locating kinship placement).

If it is an emergency -so we cannot ask if you disagree- we can share information if we believe that it is what you would have wanted and if we believe it will help you if we do share it.

**5. An Accounting of Disclosures**

When we disclose your information we keep some record of whom we sent it to, when we sent it, and what we sent. You can get an accounting (list or record) of many of these disclosures.

**E. If you have Questions or Problems**

If you need more information or have questions about the privacy practices described above, please speak to the Privacy Officer at: 1(800) 279-9914.

**All Agency**

**Access To Case Record Request**

Client: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DOB:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Assigned Foster Care Worker: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting to: (mark only one per form) [ ]  **read** [ ]  **add** [ ] **copy** [ ]  **edit**

Information to the above named client record maintained by TFI Family Connections LLC

The purpose of my request to have access to the above named client file is:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The specific information I wish to review/add/copy/edit includes:

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\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Client or Legal Guardian if client is under age 18 Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to client

|  |
| --- |
| For use by TFI Family Connections LLC ONLYDate request was received by TFI Family Connections LLC \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ By Whom: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date Assigned Worker was informed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date Director was given form: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Please indicate date information was reviewed by client: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (must be within 30/60 days)Please indicate information shared with client: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Please indicate any information copied for client: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cost paid by client:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Was request to add information [ ] approved **or** [ ]  denied Reason for denial: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Was request to edit information [ ] approved **or**  [ ]  denied Reason for denial: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Director Printed Name Director Signature Date |

cc: case file, client