



Foster Parent Handbook 2005

Department of Children, Youth and Families

Licensing Information
(401) 528-3606

Web site
<http://www.dcyf.ri.gov>

Rhode Island Foster Parents Association

Help Line
1-800-655-7787

The Foster Parent Help Line is a peer support service that is available statewide. It is staffed by foster parents who understand the issues and situations you face on a daily basis. Foster parents are encouraged to call the helpline with their questions or when they simply need someone to talk to. It is available 24/7.

Web site
<http://www.rifpa.org>

Note: For information not covered in this handbook, or for more detailed information, please refer to your Foster Parent training manual, the Foster Care Regulations (available at http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/docs/fc_reg.pdf), or your social worker or licensing worker.

Contents

Letter from Lee Sperduti, Chief of Licensing3

DCYF Licensing, Placement, and Recruitment Staff and Contact Information4

DCYF Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles.....5

National Foster Parent Association Code of Ethics6

Introduction.....7

 Overview of Foster Care.....7

 Role of Foster Parents.....7

Steps to Licensing.....8

Caring for the Child.....8

 Benefits and Services.....8

 Foster Care Rates Determination.....9

 Comfort and Privacy.....9

 Supervision.....9

 Respite Care.....10

 Problem Management/Discipline.....10

 Appropriate methods of discipline.....10

 Inappropriate discipline.....10

 Sexual Development.....11

 Medical Care.....11

 Education.....11

 Children’s Money.....12

 Visitation and Contacts.....12

 Religion.....12

 Work.....12

 Clothing.....13

 Personal Belongings.....13

 Personal Hygiene.....13

 Recreation.....13

 Meals.....13

 Required Notifications.....14

Family Court14

Transitioning from Foster Care15

 Independent Living Program.....15

 Teen Grant Program.....15

 Hope Chest Program.....15

 Life Skills Program.....15

 Higher Education Grant.....16

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Division of Licensing
101 Friendship Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Prospective or Current Foster Parent(s):

Thank you for your interest in sharing your home and your lives with foster children. This handbook is designed to be a resource for you to provide you with information you need about becoming licensed and how to care for the foster child(ren) in your home.

The quality of care children get while they are away from their homes is crucial. In addition to the problems which caused these children to enter care, each of them will suffer from the trauma of being separated from their families.

Most foster children blame themselves because they have to leave home. Some fear all adults are abusive. Some have kept secrets about abuse for so long that they may have difficulty being open and honest. Many do not view the world as a friendly or caring place.

Becoming a part of a nurturing foster family can help these children to grow and heal. Since trust and change evolve slowly, foster families need to have tolerance, patience and flexibility.

Your experience as a foster parent may at times be very challenging, but we hope you will also find it rewarding. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Lee Sperduti
Chief of Licensing

Division of Licensing

Lee Sperduti
Chief of Licensing
(401) 528-3605

Foster Care Licensing

Phil Steiner
Casework Supervisor II
(401) 528-3622

Social Caseworkers

Lynne Boissel
(401) 528-3615

Linda Iaciovano
(401) 528-3671

Mary-Ann Jordan
(401) 528-3611

Zafar Khan
(401) 528-3617

Patricia Logan
(401) 528-3620

Michael Motta
(401) 528-3609

Secretary

Maria George
(401) 528-3606

**Adoption and Foster Care Preparation
and Support Unit (Training)**

Maureen Robbins
Chief Casework Supervisor
(401) 528-3799

Clinical Training Specialists

Angela Ianotti
(401) 528-3739

Richard G. Prescott
(401) 528-3484

Evelyn Veloz-Rocheleau
(401) 528-3709

Jennifer Uriati
(401) 528-3703

Recruitment

Robin Perez
Senior Human Services Policy & Systems
Specialist
(401) 528-3791

Secretary

Michelle Catarino de Jesus
(401) 528-3483

Placement

Victoria Gartner
Casework Supervisor II
(401) 528-3775

Social Caseworkers

Don Aldridge
(401) 528-3781

Rachel Arpin
(401) 528-3779

Michelle Berard
(401) 528-3782

Case Aid Technician

Lisa Levesque
(401) 528-3778

DCYF Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

Vision

As active members of the community, we share a vision that all children, youth and families reach their fullest potential in a safe and nurturing environment.

Mission

It is the mission of DCYF to assist families with their primary responsibility to raise their children to become productive members of society. We recognize our obligations to promote, safeguard and protect the overall well-being of culturally diverse children, youth and families and the communities in which they live through a partnership with families, communities and government.

Guiding Principles

To fulfill our mission, we believe that:

- the family, community and government share responsibility for the safety, protection and well-being of children.
- when the natural family is unable to care for a child/youth, it is our responsibility, in as timely a manner as possible, to ensure the child/youth is provided permanency in his/her life in a safe, stable and nurturing environment.
- staff, foster parents and service providers are partners in the provision of timely and appropriate high quality care.
- an integrated continuum of care should emphasize prevention over intervention, reflect a partnership between family, community and government and be culturally relevant.
- partnership requires open, honest and respectful communication fostering an awareness of the quality of services and clear and agreed upon authorities and responsibilities.
- staff at all levels should be held accountable to a professional code of conduct.
- as an invaluable resource, staff are entitled to a safe, supportive work environment that fosters professional development.
- quality improvement is an on-going process, utilizing external and internal performance standards.

National Foster Parent Association Code of Ethics

January 1999

CODE OF ETHICS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

PREAMBLE

Foster family care for children is based on the theory that no unit in our society, other than the family, has ever been able to provide the special qualities needed to nurture children to their fullest mental, emotional and spiritual development. If, for a certain period, a family ceases to provide these special qualities, substitute care must be used. It is recognized that ideally, foster care is temporary in nature. Persons who provide foster family care must have commitment, compassion and faith in the dignity and worth of children, recognize and respect the rights of natural parents, and be willing to work with the child-placing agency to develop and carry out a plan of care for the child.

Foster care is a public trust that requires that the practitioners be dedicated to service for the welfare of children, that they utilize a recognized body of knowledge about human beings and their interactions, that they be committed to gaining knowledge about human beings and their interactions, and that they be committed to gaining knowledge of community resources which promote the well-being of all without discrimination.

Each foster parent has an obligation to maintain and improve the practice of fostering, constantly to examine, use and increase the knowledge upon which fostering is based, and to perform the service of fostering with integrity and competence.

PRINCIPLES

In order to provide quality foster care services, foster parents subscribe to the following principles:

- I regard as my primary obligation the welfare of the child deserved.
- I shall work objectively with the agency in effecting the permanent plan for the child in my care.
- I hold myself responsible for the quality and extent of the services I perform.
- I accept the reluctance of the child to discuss his past.
- I shall keep confidential from unauthorized persons information pertaining to any child placed in my home.
- I shall treat with respect the findings, views and actions of fellow foster parents, and use appropriate channels, such as a foster parent organization, to express my opinions.
- I shall take advantage of available opportunities for education and training designed to upgrade my performance as a foster parent.
- I respect the worth of all individuals regardless of race, religion, sex or national ancestry in my capacity as a foster parent.
- I accept the responsibility to work toward assuring that ethical standards are adhered to by any individual or organization providing foster care services.
- I shall distinguish clearly in public between my statements and actions as an individual, and as a representative of a foster parent organization.
- I accept responsibility for working toward the creation and maintenance of conditions within the field of foster family care which enable foster parents to uphold the principles of this code.

Introduction

Overview of Foster Care (<http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/foster.htm>)

Foster Care is a protective service provided to families experiencing difficulties so severe that children must be removed from their homes for a planned, temporary period of time. Children are removed to insure their physical and emotional safety.

The primary goal of foster care is to reunify families. Foster care includes supplemental family care in an approved home. While children are residing in a foster home, a variety of services are provided to parents and children with the objective of resolving the problems that led to placement.

Foster care is a team effort in establishing safety and permanency for children. It is not a lifetime commitment to a child, but rather a commitment to be meaningful in a child's lifetime.

Foster parents are licensed by the Department of Children, Youth and Families to care for children who must temporarily leave their parents' homes. Many of these children have been abused and neglected, and have been removed from their homes for their own protection. Others need alternative care because the families are experiencing a crisis, or because the needs of the children cannot be met in the home. In every case, DCYF will be working with the parents to help them to resolve their problems so that children who are in placement can be returned home as soon as it possible to do so safely.

Role of Foster Parents

Foster parents are DCYF's major resource for children who need to be placed outside the home. It is the role of foster parents to offer a safe and stable home to these children while working with the agency to prepare them for their reunification with their parents.

The quality of care children get while they are away from their homes is crucial. In addition to the problems which caused these children to enter care, each of them will suffer from the trauma of being separated from their families. Most foster children blame themselves because they have to leave home. Some fear all adults are abusive. Some have kept secrets about abuse for so long that they may have difficulty being open and honest. Many do not view the world as a friendly or caring place. Becoming a part of a nurturing foster family can help these children to grow and heal. Since trust and change evolve slowly, foster families need to have tolerance, patience and flexibility.

Foster parents tend to a child's daily needs and help him/her to adjust to their home and family. Each child will have a social worker who will help the foster parents provide the medical, educational and other supportive help that the child will need in order to adjust. Social workers coordinate the effort to reunite the child and his/her family through the provision of regular visitation as well as facilitating counseling as needed.

In order to insure the quality of care provided to the child who is placed outside his/her home, RI State law (42-72.1) mandates that all foster homes be licensed by the Department. The Department has developed specific procedures for processing foster home applications in an effort to insure that each foster home meets minimum standards of health, safety and care.

Prospective foster homes must complete an application. Criminal records checks must be completed on every individual living in the home who is eighteen (18) years of age or older. Additionally, a search of DCYF records is done to determine if there has been previous involvement with DCYF and the nature of the involvement. A fire inspection must be conducted on the home or apartment. A physician's reference must be completed. The prospective foster

parent must participate in a course of pre-service training as well as a home study conducted by one of the Department's licensing workers.

DCYF recognizes that foster parents provide an invaluable service to the children in their care and to the community as a whole. In an effort to assist caregivers in their work, DCYF provides a number of support services to the families and children. These services include foster board payments, clothing allowances for the children, and medical coverage for the children. The Department also assists with the cost of smoke detectors and remote boiler switches.

Other supports available to foster parents are available in the person of DCYF's Foster Parent Liaison and The Rhode Island Foster Parent Association. The Rhode Island Foster Parents Association maintains a Help Line to provide information and/or clarify issues. RIFPA also maintains a Mentor Program for both non-relative and relative foster parents.

Steps to Licensing

- Fingerprinting—is required by state law. You will need to go to your local police station to be fingerprinted.
- Medical report—We must receive a report from your doctor on your general health.
- Fire inspection—Your home must be inspected and approved for fire safety by a DCYF Fire Inspector. If a boiler switch is needed, you will be reimbursed for reasonable costs.
- Orientation Classes—You must call and sign up for this specialized training.
- Home Study—A licensing worker will meet with you at your home to complete a home study.

Caring for the Child

Benefits and Services

The child in your care may be able to receive

- Medical care—through Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island.
- Foster board—to reimburse families for the child's expenses. For additional information see Foster Care Rates Determination, page 8. Standard board rates are:
 - Age 0-3 is \$14.39/day
 - Age 4-11 is \$13.64/day
 - Age 12 and over is \$15.79/day
- Clothing allowances—three times a year to help cover the costs of dressing the child, in April, August, and mid-November. If the child has been removed by the time the check is received, the check must be returned to DCYF. For additional information see Clothing, page 11.
 - Age 0-3 is \$100
 - Age 4-11 is \$150
 - Age 12 and over is \$250
- WIC—provides milk, cheese and other food to children 5 and under. All DCYF children are eligible for WIC.
 - For WIC information call the RI Department of Health Family Health Information Hotline at 1-800-942-7434.
- School lunches are free to children under DCYF care.
- Licensed day care—for eligible working foster parents who can prove working status

- Call Options for Working Parents, a statewide resource and referral service, at (401) 272-7510, or visit their web site at <http://www.optionsforworkingparents.com>
- Use the DCYF Day Care Provider Directory, at <http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/provider.htm>

Foster Care Rates Determination (Procedure from Policy 900.0050)

DCYF provides a “Standard Board Rate” to reimburse foster parent(s) for the “usual and customary costs incurred in caring for a foster child, based on the child’s age.”

DCYF provides a “Supplemental Board Rate” for children whose needs “exceed normal limits of care, service, and supervision for a child of that age.” When a worker and foster parent(s) believe that a child may be entitled to a Supplemental Board Rate, they shall together complete a Uniform Foster Care Rate Evaluation Worksheet (DCYF #021A).

Comfort and Privacy (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- All sleeping rooms for children shall have at least one window, and shall be used only as bedrooms.
- Living rooms, dining rooms, and halls shall not be used as bedrooms for the foster child, or any other member of the household. An exemption may be made for relative caretakers.
- Attics, basements and cellars must meet all codes and regulations to be used as bedrooms.
- Each foster child shall have his/her own bed of a type and size appropriate to the child’s stage of development. Cots will not be considered beds. Each infant shall have his/her own full size crib that must conform to all safety regulations.
- Except for children under the age of one (1) year, sufficient sleeping space shall be available so that neither the parent’s own child nor the foster child shares the bedroom of any adult.
- A child more than three (3) years of age shall not share a bedroom with any child of the opposite sex.
- Except for children under the age of one (1) year, space shall be provided within the sleeping room for the child’s personal possessions and for a reasonable degree of privacy.
- Each sleeping room shall provide a minimum of square footage of floor space per child in accordance with the State Fire Code. [50 square feet per child in a junior size bed and 24 square feet for a child in a crib. Relative providers are exempt from this section, providing the sleeping arrangement is approved by the Fire Inspectors.]
- No more than four (4) children shall be permitted to sleep in one bedroom.
- Where bunk beds are used, the vertical distance between the mattresses shall allow each occupant to sit up comfortably in bed; the top bunk shall be fastened securely to the side frames. No child under the age of six (6) will be allowed to sleep in the top bunk.
- No child under the age of three (3) will be allowed to sleep on a waterbed at any time.
- Youth or toddler beds can only be used for children ages two (2) to four (4).

Supervision (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

Each child in care shall be adequately supervised at all times, as appropriate to the child’s needs and level of development. When the foster parent must be absent from the home for any reason, the child shall be left in the care of a competent person. Foster parent should provide the

caseworker, with the names and ages of all baby sitters who care for the child on a regularly scheduled basis for extended periods. Overnight sitters must be at least eighteen years old. BCI and DCYF clearances will be completed by the child's case worker. If the absence of the foster parent is on a regular basis, the child care arrangements made by the foster parent shall be approved by the agency.

Respite Care (Policy 700.0205)

Respite is defined as substitute care for a child in a foster placement or subsidized adoption home due to presenting medical, emotional, behavioral and developmental problems of the child and/or vacation or emergency situations, that can be documented, within the foster family.

When respite care is needed, notify the worker with the dates, time frame, and respite provider (if already identified). *Notification should take place at least 3 weeks in advance* of the need for respite, except in family emergencies that can be documented.

Problem Management/Discipline

Foster parents should make every effort to use the same disciplinary methods with all children in the household, within the following limitations. Disciplinary methods should stress praise and encouragement for the desired behavior. Rules and expectations should be explained in a way the child can understand, and should occur during the child's initial orientation to the home.

Appropriate methods of discipline include

- Removing the child from the stressful, problem-producing situation
- Giving a child a "time-out" until he has calmed down. A reasonable time-out rule of thumb is one minute for each year of age.
- Sitting the child on a "thinking chair" for a few minutes.
- Taking away certain privileges. This must be for a realistic period of time. It becomes ineffective if you take away the TV or a bicycle for a month.
- Keep from being drawn into heated arguments and debates. It is sometimes better to remove yourself from the situation and tell the child you refuse to argue but would be willing to discuss the matter later when you are both calm.

Inappropriate discipline (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Children shall not be punished for actions over which they have no control.
- Children are not to be punished for bedwetting or in the course of toilet training activities.
- Foster parents shall not subject a child to verbal abuse or to derogatory remarks about him or herself, family, race, or ethnic background, or to threats of physical violence, or to repeated threats of removal.

The foster parent shall not use, or delegate any other person to use, any of the following punishments on a child:

- Corporal (physical) punishment of any form, including hitting, slapping, pinching, spanking, paddling, shaking, kicking, biting, mechanical restraint or un-approved physical restraint
- Requiring or forcing the child to take a painful or uncomfortable position, including but not limited to squatting, kneeling, bending

- Requiring or forcing the child to repeat physical movements
- Verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation
- Denial of elements of the case plan, including visitation with the legal family
- Delegation of discipline to other children, or to persons unknown to the child
- Assignment of physically strenuous exercise or work
- Withholding of any meal
- Unreasonable or prolonged denial of involvement in extracurricular or community activities, contact with peers, visiting or communicating privileges
- Denial of sufficient sleep
- Requiring the child to remain silent for long periods of time
- Denial of shelter, clothing, or bedding
- Isolation of a child in a small, confined space, including a closet, locked room, or a box
- Prolonged withholding of emotional response or stimulation
- Destruction or unreasonable withholding of a child's property.

Sexual Development (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Sexual maltreatment of any child is prohibited.
- Be sensitive to the special needs of the child who has been sexually abused, and shall request help from the child's case worker or supervisor whenever a difficulty arises in this area. Should assistance not be available, the parent shall contact the licensing agency. [For extensive information and resources, please see Week #4 in your training handbook, "Sexual Abuse and Its Impact."]
- Be aware of the child's needs for appropriate information about sexuality geared the child's age and state of development. A foster parent should consult with the case worker or supervisor for any necessary assistance in providing information to the child.

Medical Care (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Ensure that the child's medical needs are addressed in a timely and competent manner.
- Inform the agency in a timely manner of any care or treatment provided to the child by a professional medical person.
- Make no decision regarding major medical or surgical intervention, including the use of psychotropic medicine, without the approval of the agency, except in emergencies.
- Be aware that if a child has some form of a medical disability, they may require more medical attention than the average child.

Education (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Enroll a child of school age in the appropriate school within five school days of the child's placement into the home.
- Cooperate with the agency, the child, and the educational advocate, if any, in the development and maintenance of the child's educational plans.
- Advise DCYF on a regular basis of the child's education performance.
- Review grade reports and other information.
- Provide a quiet, well-lit space for the child to study, and establish regular times for homework and study.

Children's Money (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- When age and circumstances permit, a foster parent shall allow and encourage a child to possess his or her own money.
- A foster parent shall give a child above the age of five years a reasonable allowance at least weekly. The amount and frequency of the allowance shall be agreed upon with the agency.
- Money earned, received as a gift or an allowance by the child shall be the child's personal property.
- A foster parent may limit the amount of money a child may possess or to which he/she has unencumbered access, when the limitations are in the child's best interest and agreed upon with the agency.
- A foster parent shall not require a child to assume any part of the expenses for his or her care unless indicated by the case plan.
- A foster parent may deduct reasonable sums from a child's allowance to pay restitution for damages done by the child, if such restitution is agreed upon by the case worker and documented. Restitution must be based on the child's ability to pay.
- When a foster child has ongoing earned income from employment, he or she shall be encouraged to establish an interest-bearing savings account. The foster parent is encouraged to monitor the child's expenditures, and any withdrawals and deposits to his or her accounts. The agency shall be notified of the existence of the child's savings account.

Visitation and Contacts (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- A foster parent shall support visitation between the child and his or her family as outlined in the child's case plan.
- In accordance with the child's case plan, there shall be reasonable opportunity provided for the child's use of the foster home telephone to contact family and friends.
- A foster parent shall not restrict or censor correspondence to or from the child, except in accordance with the child's case plan.

Religion (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- A foster parent shall not require any religious observance or practice of a child, except upon the written request of the parent or guardian.
- Reasonable efforts shall be made by the foster parent to provide the opportunity for a child to participate in religious observances or practices other than that of the foster parent in accordance with the wishes of the parent or guardian.
- The foster parent shall notify and receive the approval of the agency before any change in religious affiliation is made by the child; nothing herein shall be construed to suggest that the Department may prevent a change in religious affiliation by a child of sufficient age and competence to make such a decision.

Work (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- A child shall not be required, nor denied the opportunity to work outside the foster home, except in accordance with the case plan.
- Notify the agency whenever a child is working outside the foster home.

- Notify and involve each child, as age and circumstances permit, in routine household maintenance.
 - Ensure that household chores are performed in a reasonable and safe manner.
 - Do not require the child to perform household chores in a manner dissimilar to any other child in the household of similar age or ability.

Clothing (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Ensure that each child has adequate, clean, well fitting and seasonable clothing that is age and gender appropriate.
- A child's clothing must be identifiably his or hers and not shared in common.
- A foster parent shall surrender all clothing identified as that child's clothing when the child is discharged from the home.
- All monies provided by the agency for a child's clothing shall be expended exclusively for clothing for the child.

Personal Belongings (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- A child shall be allowed to bring his or her personal belongings to the foster home, and to acquire belongings of his or her own.
- A foster parent may, as necessary, limit or supervise the use of an item.
- Where extraordinary limitations are imposed, the child shall be informed the reasons. Limitation shall be discussed with and agreed to by the agency.
- The foster parent shall make reasonable provisions for the protection of a child's property.
- A foster parent shall surrender to the child his or her personal belongings when he or she is discharged from the foster home.

Personal Hygiene (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Provide age appropriate training to the child to establish habits of physical cleanliness, good grooming and personal hygiene. Ensure that each child has necessary articles for his or her own use to maintain personal hygiene.
- Foster parents who care for children of color are expected, if necessary, to obtain information on how to care for their hair and skin.

Recreation (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Provide regular opportunities for recreational activities that are appropriate to the age and abilities of the child.
- Encourage the child to participate in school and community services and activities both with the family and on his or her own.
- Encourage and arrange for the child to have contacts and friendships with other children.
- Make available materials and equipment appropriate to the child's age and ability for both active and quiet play.

Meals (Foster Care Regulations, 1998)

- Provide a minimum of three well-balanced meals, or the equivalent, each day at regular times, with not more than 14 hours between the evening meal and breakfast.

- Do not exclude the child from family meals.
- Provide for any special dietary needs as determined by a proper medical authority or as dictated by the child's religion or culture.

Required Notifications

- The foster parent shall notify the agency prior to allowing any person to visit in the home for longer than three days.
- The foster parent shall notify the agency prior to making plans for the care of the child by another person for a period in excess of 48 hours.
- The foster parent shall notify the agency immediately in any of the following instances:
 - The death of a child
 - Serious injury or illness involving medical treatment of the child
 - Serious emotional or behavioral crisis which may endanger the child or others
 - When a child has been subjected to alleged abuse or neglect, or has been the alleged victim of assault or other physical or sexual abuse
 - Unauthorized absence of the child from the home in accordance with Department policy
 - Removal of the child from the home by any person or agency other than the placing agency, or any attempts at such removal
 - Any fire or other emergency requiring overnight evacuation of the premises
 - Any exclusion of a child from school or involvement with the police
 - Any changes in household composition
- The foster parent shall inform the agency as soon as possible, but not more than 5 working days following any circumstance listed below
 - Any serious illness or death in the household
 - The permanent departure of any member of the household
 - Any other circumstance or incident seriously affecting the child or child care
- The foster parent shall inform the agency at least 4 weeks prior to a planned move of residence.
- The foster parent shall notify the agency by the end of the next working day of any fire requiring the services of the fire department within the residence.
- The foster parent shall notify the agency within 5 working days prior to taking foster child out of state.

Family Court (Policy 700.0095)

DCYF provides notice to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relatives, with whom children in the care of the Department are placed, of any review or hearing held in Family Court with respect to those children. This includes all hearings scheduled both prior to and subsequent to commitment resulting from dependency/neglect/abuse petitions and all hearings related to termination of parental rights petitions.

Caretakers are important to the child and can provide valuable information to the Family Court. They have the right to attend these court proceedings and to present verbal reports or file written reports with the Court regarding the children in their care.

The Notice of Court Proceedings (DCYF #083) notifies caretakers of their right to attend Family Court Proceedings regarding children in their care and that they have the right to file a written or verbal report with the Court to convey information relevant to those children.

In accordance with Rhode Island General Law 14-1-30.2, foster parents/relative caretakers and pre-adoptive parents are not deemed to be parties to the proceedings and therefore are not entitled to:

1. Present testimony through the presentation of witnesses.
2. Question or cross examine witnesses in any such Court proceedings.

Transitioning from Foster Care

Independent Living Program (from http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/indpndt_living.htm)

This program assists DCYF youth age 16 and older who are transitioning from care. There are many services associated with this program, including those listed below.

Teen Grant Program

What it Is

The teen Grant Program provides grants in amounts up to \$500 per year for youths aged 16 and older, who reside in foster care. Grants can be used for a variety of purpose related to the transition to independence, including workshops, supplies and tools for vocational training programs, art supplies, sports equipment or fees, musical instruments and lessons and other extracurricular activities that will provide youth with tangible skills or enhanced self-esteem.

How to Participate

Youth submit an application to the Teen Grant Program which is managed by the RI Foster Parents Association. A committee, which includes youth, foster parents and staff, reviews requests on a monthly basis. Applications and more information can be obtained by calling the Foster Parents Association at 401-738-9915 or by contacting the Independent Living Coordinator at 401-528-3764.

Hope Chest Program

What it Is

The Hope Chest Program provides grants in amounts up to \$500 per year for youths aged 16 and older who reside in group care. Grants can be used for the same purposes as described in the Teen Grant Program.

How to Participate

Youth submit an application to the Hope Chest Program which is managed by Communities for People, Inc. A committee of youth and staff review and award grants on a monthly basis. Applications and more information can be obtained by calling The Hope Chest Program at 401-273-7103 or by contacting the Independent Living Coordinator at 401-528-3764.

Life Skills Program

What it Is

The Life Skills Program provides an individual skill assessment and over 100 hours of group instruction in fourteen skill areas to youth, aged sixteen and older, who reside in foster and group care. The Life Skills Program is conducted, through contract with the Department of Children, Youth and Families, by the Foster Parent Association.

Following a referral to the program by the DCYF Social Caseworker, the foster parents or the youth themselves, staff from the Life Skills Center program schedule an appointment with

the youth to explain the program and to assess the youth's skills. The youth is then scheduled to attend the next session of classes.

The Life Skills Center conducts classes Monday through Thursday from 3:30 - 6:30, with youth attending either a Monday and Wednesday session or a Tuesday and Thursday session for twenty weeks, receiving six hours weekly and over 100 hours total of life skills education. The fourteen skill areas include budgeting and money management, food preparation, housing and career planning.

Field trips and guest speakers supplement the curriculum. The Life Skills Center provides transportation to youth in foster care. Youth receive a stipend of \$200 for completing the program and participate in a graduation celebration.

How to Participate

To register, or for more information, contact the Life Skills Center at 401-738-9915.

Higher Education Grant

What it Is

Money is available for youth in the custody of DCYF to attend Rhode Island College, the University of Rhode Island or the Community College of Rhode Island.

This grant money can fund the gap between other financial aid and the full cost of tuition, room and board, books and related expenses.

Youth are eligible to apply if they:

- have been in the custody of DCYF for a minimum of 24 months at the time of the recommendation;
- have received a high school diploma or GED not more than 1 year prior to the date of recommendation;
- have been accepted into either CCRI, RI College, or URI;
- have applied for financial aid;
- are under age 21;
- are enrolled full time.

How to apply

Start with a phone call to the Independent Living Coordinator, John O'Riley, at 401-528-3764.