

Foster parents provide an indispensable service to the State of Idaho by caring for thousands of foster children each year. They open their homes to children separated from their families and are committed to offering love and stability during the most challenging and important times in a child's life. Acknowledging the significance of this commitment, the Idaho Foster Parent Bill of Rights was created to inform foster parents and department staff about the rights foster parents have while caring for children. Foster parents are to be informed of these rights and encouraged to make it known if their rights aren't being honored. While not all the rights are legally required or protected and thus do not support legal recourse by foster parents, they are important and intended to recognize the critical role of foster parents in the care and nurturing of children who are in the custody of the Department of Health and Welfare.

## ALL FOSTER PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

### **1. Be treated with dignity, respect, trust, value, and consideration as members of the professional team caring for foster children.**

- a. Foster parents have the right to fair treatment and to be free from discrimination.
- b. Foster parents have the right to accept or refuse placement within their home, and to request, upon reasonable notice to the department, the removal of a child from their home for good cause without threat of reprisal for acting on such good cause.
- c. Foster parents have the right to confidentiality regarding issues that arise in the foster home unless required by law or court order. Foster parents have the right to be consulted in the decision to release the foster family's personal information unless required by law or court order.
- d. Foster parents have the right to a written explanation of their role as foster parents, the role of the Department of Health and Welfare, and the rights and role of the members of the birth family of a child in foster care
- e. Foster parents have the right to respect from the Department of Health and Welfare regarding the grief and loss that the foster family has experienced when a child leaves their home.

### **2. Be supported by the department in their valued role as the primary provider of foster care.**

- a. Foster parents have the right to receive timely financial reimbursement and to be notified of the types of expenses for which the foster parent may be eligible for reimbursement.
- b. Foster parents have the right to be given standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs.
- c. Foster parents have the right to collaborate with the department to receive and provide evaluation and feedback on their role as foster caregiver.
- d. Foster parents have the right to reasonable respite to care for themselves and the foster family.
- e. Foster parents have the right to access a Resource Peer Mentor to serve as an unbiased advocate providing mentorship, advocacy, and support to foster parents through placement challenges, allegations, or grievances.
- f. Foster parents have the right to exercise reasonable and prudent parental substitute authority, upon completion of the provided training related to this area.

## ALL FOSTER PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

### **3. Timely, accurate, and respectful communication with department staff.**

- a. Foster parents have the right to have meaningful face to face monthly contact with their department case manager and have their phone calls, text messages, or emails returned in a timely manner.
- b. Foster parents have the right to timely notice of court hearings and to be informed of their right to be heard in all hearings after the adjudicatory hearing. They have the right to be promptly informed of pertinent decisions made by the court and the department concerning the child in their care.
- c. Foster parents have the right to receive information about a child, at placement and on an ongoing basis, that could impact the care provided to the child, the health and safety of the child, and the health and safety of foster family members. They have the right to a history of the child's previous placements and reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies previous foster parents without their consent.
- d. Foster parents have the right to be given reasonable notice of any change in the services provided to the child.
- e. Foster parents have the right to communicate with professionals including, but not limited to, therapists, physicians, and teachers who work directly with the child as allowable under state and federal law.
- f. Foster parents have the right to a written notice regarding a planned placement change at least seven days before the change in placement. In the case of planned placement changes that occur within the first 60 days of a child's placement, foster parents have the right to a written notice no later than seven days following the change in placement. Foster parents have the right to a written notice regarding unplanned placement changes no later than seven days following the placement change.
- g. Foster parents have the right to copies of the information contained in their foster care licensing file.

### **4. Be actively involved in case planning for children in their care.**

- a. Foster parents have the right to be informed of, and actively participate in, the child's case planning meetings.
- b. Foster parents have the right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parent re-enters foster care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the foster parent's home. While the child is in care, and when feasible and safe, the Department of Health and Welfare will encourage the maintenance of positive attachments in the foster child's life with former foster parents who had a meaningful relationship with the child.
- c. Foster parents have the right for consideration for a child placed in their home who becomes available for adoption.
- d. Foster parents have the right to provide input concerning treatment and services for the child and to have that input be given respect and consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other member of the treatment team.
- e. Foster parents have the right to participate in and be informed about the planning of visitation between the child and the child's biological family, recognizing the importance of visitation with the child's biological family.

## ALL FOSTER PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

### **5** Raise concerns without fear of reprisal and have issues addressed in a sensitive, respectful, timely and confidential manner.

- a. Foster parents have the right to file a grievance and be informed of the process for filing a grievance to make their concerns known and receive resolution.
- b. Foster parents have the right to be provided a fair and timely investigation of complaints concerning the operation of a foster home, and to have an advocate present at all portions of investigations of abuse and neglect at which an accused foster parent is present.
- c. Foster parents have the right to be provided the opportunity to appeal decisions that affect licensing retention as set forth in law.