



BILATERAL SERVICE AGREEMENT

Purpose:

The purpose of this Agreement is to identify the expectations for both foster parents and the Department of Children and Families on behalf of the children and families that are served in the foster care program. Note: for this agreement, Department means Family Safety staff, Lead Agency Staff, Contract Case Management staff or Contract Licensing staff. This agreement reflects standards of care that are current requirements in Florida Administrative Code, which are based on statutory authority found in section 409.175, Florida Statutes. The premise of this agreement is that the department and foster parents must work as partners to assure safety, to provide for the physical and mental well being and to obtain permanency for each child.

Department Responsibilities to foster parents include:

- a. To treat foster parents with courtesy, respect and as an important team member.
- b. To show support by responding within 24 hours to telephone messages and written correspondence.
- c. To the fullest extent possible, to schedule all meetings with the foster parents at mutually convenient times.
- d. To provide or arrange for training opportunities that are offered at a time and location that are as convenient as possible for foster parents.
- e. To meet, address and resolve complaints regarding foster parents or disputes between the foster parents and the department, if necessary.
- f. To notify foster parents within 2 working days when a new Family Services counselor is assigned to children in their home. To provide the new counselor's name, work phone number, an after-hours phone number and the counselor's supervisor's name and telephone number.
- g. To provide at least once a year, performance feedback through the use of the Family Services Counselor's Review of Foster Parent(s) Performance form, CF-FSP 5223 and The Quality of Foster Care Home: Community Input form, CF-FSP 5225. The Child exit interviews completed during the year will be included as part of the performance review.
- h. To discuss prior to placement of a child, the information in the Child Service Agreement, and upon placement to provide a copy of the Child Service Agreement.
- i. To provide the child's Resource Record to the foster parents no later than 72 hours after placement. To provide updated information to the foster parent in a timely manner.

- j. To provide the case plan, which is a record of services to for the child and family, within 72 hours of placement of the child or within 24 hours of acceptance of the case plan by the court.
- k. To provide a board payment for each child placed in the home based on the established rate structure. Payments will be made each month in a prompt fashion.
District anticipated payment date: _____
- l. To provide each year, a clothing payment based on the established rate for new clothing and shoes for the child.
- m. To provide the foster parents a minimum of one face to face visit every calendar month by the child's Family Services counselor when there is a foster child in the home. This visit must take place in the foster parents' home. The visits may need to take place more frequently if the foster parents and/or child are experiencing difficulties.
- n. To provide the foster parents who are caring for a child on shelter status a minimum of one home visit per calendar week by the counselor.
- o. To ask for the opinions and ideas of the foster parents when preparing updated case plans, during monthly visits to the home, case plan meetings, departmental staffings, court hearings and any other forum in which the foster child is discussed.
- p. To provide notice of all court hearings and departmental staffings, pertaining to children in their care, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting or hearing.
- q. If available, respite care will be provided by the department with a 30-day notice when either the foster parents or the department requests such service. Emergency respite care shall be provided by the department when requested by the foster parent(s).

Foster Parent Responsibilities to the child include:

- a. To make a commitment to work with the child for the length of time necessary before the child goes to a permanent home.
- b. To provide acceptance and care to the child by praising the child often, showing appropriate emotional responses, listening to the child's feelings and asking for the child's opinions.
- c. To treat the child as if the child is their own. The child must receive the same food as the rest of the family, should be taken on family outings, and vacations and should be shown the same amount of time, interest, and patience the rest of the family receives.
- d. To ensure that the child has supervision appropriate to his/her age and/or developmental level.
- e. To assist in setting up visits with the child's parent(s) or relatives.



- f. To never make negative statements about a child's family.
- g. To work with the child, parents, department, and significant others to ensure that the child has a smooth transition when he/she returns to family or is placed in another permanent home or interim placement.
- h. To transport and accompany the child to medical, dental, mental health appointments and visits with parents and relatives.
- i. To provide the child his/her monthly spending allowance which is included in the board payment.
- j. To buy the child clothing and necessary toiletries with the monthly board rate and clothing allowance as referenced in the Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227.
- k. To keep an inventory of all belongings the child brought to the home as well as those purchased or subsequently obtained for the child. These belongings must go with the child when they leave the foster home.
- l. To support and encourage the religious beliefs, ethnic heritage and language of the child and the child's family. If the child wishes to attend cultural events or religious services, the foster parents will provide or arrange transportation.
- m. To adhere to the department's safety and discipline policies, see Attachment A. Failure to comply with the department's safety and discipline policies may result in the removal of children from the home.
- n. To give the child medication in the dosage and duration as prescribed by a doctor or psychiatrist and keep thorough documentation in the Child Resource Record.
- o. To enroll each school age child in school within three school days of child's placement in the home. To request assistance from the department if there are problems.
- p. To inform the school in writing that they (foster parents) wish to be notified and participate in Individual Education Plan meetings, school activities and conferences.
- q. To encourage and facilitate parental participation in school activities, including Individual Education Plan meetings, conferences, etc. (Unless parents' rights have been terminated, the parents have the right to give school-related consents.)
- r. To attend and take part in court hearings, and other staffings concerning the child and the child's family.
- s. To promote the following conditions for the child in the home:
 - 1. Opportunities and encouragement to communicate and have contact with family members, friends and other people important to the child. The only exception is when the court specifically bars contact with an individual.
 - 2. Respect for the child's body, person, possessions, bed and personal space.

3. Encouragement and assistance in decorating his/her room with items that reflect the child's interests, heritage, culture, family and individual personality.
4. Opportunities to develop interests and skills through participation in school and community activities, such as music, art, sports and special interest clubs.
5. Encouragement and support in making new friends and maintaining past friends who have a positive relationship with the child.
6. Encourage the child's sense of pride and accomplishment in his/her abilities when goals are achieved. Provide special recognition and praise when the child does something important for their progress and well being.
7. Provide the child with suitable clothing, is appropriate for the weather, and appropriate for the age of the child. Whenever reasonable, the child's preferences in clothing should be considered.

Foster Parent Responsibilities to the department include:

- a. To treat department staff, the child's family, and Guardian ad Litem, etc. with respect and courtesy.
- b. To complete the Foster Parent's Review of Family Services Counselor Performance form, CF-FSP 5224 as requested for children who were in the home 30 days or more.
- c. To take part in at least eight hours of yearly in-service training approved by the department.
- d. To notify the department immediately of a potential change in address, living arrangements, marital status, family composition (who is in the home), employment, significant health changes or any other condition that may affect the child's well-being.
- e. To notify the department promptly of all contacts the family or any member of the home has with police or any law enforcement agencies.
- f. To take only the department's children into care and make no plans for allowing other children or adults to reside in the home, without prior approval is given by the department.
- g. To be available 24 hours per day seven days per week to receive children if the home is licensed as an emergency shelter home.
- h. To accept the direction and supervision given by department in caring for the child.
- i. To accept the board payment per month as shown in the Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227.
- j. To use the clothing allowance referred to in Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227, to buy the child clothes and shoes.

- k. To obtain authorization from the department prior to spending money if repayment is expected.
- l. To hold confidential all information about the child and the child's family and discuss the information only with a department staff member or a specialist (i.e., doctor, psychiatrist, therapist) working with the child.
- m. To keep the Child's Resource Record up-to-date (including the quarterly photograph of the child provided by the department).
- n. To allow the child to be removed from the foster home only by a department staff member, Guardian ad Litem, or another party granted permission by the department or the court. To verify the identify and authority of staff and other parties when not known to the foster parent.
- o. To obtain prior approval for the movement of the child to another home for the purpose of respite.
- p. To know where and with whom the child is staying and the type of supervision the child is receiving when foster parents approve an outing or overnight activity. Children may not remain in an unlicensed setting for any time other than a planned, supervised outing or overnight activity without the explicit approval of the department.
- q. To take the following actions if the child is missing or has runaway:
 - 1. Immediately notify law enforcement to report a missing child or run away
 - 2. Notify the department that the child is missing or runaway
 - 3. Check to see if any personal belongings are gone
 - 4. Write down what the child was last seen wearing, if the child has any identifying marks, if the child has any medical or physical conditions that require immediate attention
 - 5. Locate a recent photograph of the child
 - 6. Contact friends, teachers or employers to see if they have knowledge of where the child is
 - 7. Once a missing person report is taken the foster parent must record the case number, obtain a copy of the report (if available) and provide them to the department
- r. To notify the department immediately if the child needs medical attention for sickness, injuries or significant changes in the child's health.
- s. To immediately notify the department of any sexually inappropriate action or behavior by the foster child.
- t. To work with the department to meet the needs of the child by attending scheduled meetings to discuss the child and his/her family.



- u. To work with the department in planning for the child, which may include transfer to an adoptive placement or return to parent(s) or relative(s) or becoming an adoptive placement.
- v. To refrain from engaging in any legal action to acquire custody of the child without the department's consent. Adoption by a child's foster parents is often the best choice for finding a permanent home for a child when reunification is not an option. In these situations the foster parents and the department will work together to achieve this goal.
- w. To notify the department if any Family Services Counselor with a child in the home does not make a visit each calendar month. Notification should be made by calling 1 800 FLA-FIND.
- x. To not sign blank or incomplete visitation forms or to falsify any record on which the department relies. (Such action may result in the foster care license being revoked.)

The department may remove the child from the foster home at anytime but will, whenever possible, give a two-week notice. Foster parents may request the department to remove a child from the home, but will, whenever possible, give the department at least a two-week notice, except when the child poses a threat to himself, herself or others, or a crisis in the foster family compromises the foster care parents' ability to care for the child.

Non-compliance with any of the above provisions may result in administrative action by the Department which could include, corrective action, suspension, revocation or denial of further licensure pursuant to Chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

I/we have read, understand and agree to abide by the terms of this agreement.

Foster Father's Signature

Date

Foster Mother's Signature

Date

Department Representative Signature

Date

Title



ATTACHMENT A

Safety Policies:

1. Swimming pools must have a barrier on all four sides of at least four feet. The barrier may consist of a house plus a fence on the remaining three sides or a four-sided fence. All access through the barrier must have one of the following safety features: alarm, key lock, self-locking doors or a bolt lock that is not accessible to children. When the swimming pool is not in use, all entry points must be locked. Above ground pools must have steps or ladders leading to it secured, locked, or removed when the pool is not in use. Hot tubs and spas shall be required to have a safety cover that is locked when not in use. Swimming pools must be equipped with one of the following life saving devices:
 - (1) **Ring buoy;**
 - (2) **Rescue tube; or**
 - (3) **Other appropriate flotation device with a rope attached which is sufficient length to cover the area.**
2. All medications, poisonous chemicals, and cleaning materials must be in a locked place and inaccessible to children.
3. Alcoholic beverages should be stored out of the reach of small children. To avoid access to alcoholic beverages by older children, it is recommended that these beverages be kept in a locked place.
4. If the substitute care parents own a gun, the ammunition and unloaded firearm must be kept separately in locked cabinets.
5. Pets in the home must be vaccinated and their vaccinations must be current.
6. The home must be safe from fire hazards. All combustible items must be stored away from sources of heat. The home must not be heated by unvented gas.
7. All fireplaces, space heaters, steam radiators, and hot surfaces must be shielded against accidental contact. The substitute care parents must have an evacuation plan posted in a conspicuous place and must share it with each child. The substitute care parents must conduct periodic fire drills to make sure all the children understand the procedures. Fire drills should be held at least every six months. The date of the fire drill should be recorded and reviewed at the time of relicensure.

8. If the home is equipped with burglar bars, the caregiver must demonstrate that:
 - (a) **The burglar bars can be released to allow exit; or**
 - (b) That other means of exit are readily available from each sleeping area.
9. Substitute parents must have transportation available 24 hours a day. All vehicles used to transport children must be in safe condition, in compliance with applicable motor vehicle laws of the state, and equipped with seat belts and approved car seats for children under the age of four years.

Discipline Policies:

1. **The foster parents must discipline children with kindness, consistency, and understanding, and with the purpose of helping the child develop responsibility with self-control.**
 2. The foster parents must help each child learn that he/she is responsible for his/her behavior by teaching him the natural and learned consequences of his/her behaviors.
3. **Foster parents must use positive methods of discipline, including the following:**
 - (I) **Rewarding/praising acceptable behavior;**
 - (II) **Verbal disappointment of the child's behavior;**
 - (III) **Loss of privilege(s);**
 - (IV) **Grounding, restricting the child to the house or yard, or sending the child out of the room and away from the family activity; and,**
 - (V) **Redirecting the child's activity, for example, if a child is playing with a sharp object take the object away, and replace it with a safe toy.**
4. **The foster parents must not allow children in care to be subjected to verbal abuse, derogatory remarks about themselves and family members.**
5. **The foster parents must not subject children to cruel, severe, humiliating or unusual punishment, for example, to use soap to wash out the mouth, eating hot sauces or pepper, placing in hot water, kneeling on stones, etc.**
6. **The foster parents must not use corporal punishment of any kind.**
7. **The foster parent must not delegate discipline of a foster child to another child or to an adult not known to the child.**
8. **The foster parents must not withhold meals, clothing, or shelter as a form of punishment.**
9. **The foster parents must not punish children for bed-wetting or errors that occur during the toilet training process.**



- 10. The foster parents must not resist implementation of the case plan as punishment for misdeeds of a child.**
- 11. The foster parents must not deny a child contact or visits with his family as punishment.**
- 12. Foster parents may assign additional routine home chores as the consequence of misbehavior, although these chores must not involve physical exercise so excessive as to endanger the child's health, or so extensive as to interfere with time set aside for school work, sleeping, or eating.**
13. The foster parent(s) must not threaten a child with removal from the home or with a report to authorities as punishment for behavior. Threatening the child with removal plays into the child's conviction that they are doomed to a series of placements and rejections. The Family Services counselor's task is to identify the child's specific behaviors which are causing the substitute parent to request the child's removal. Once problems are identified, the Family Services counselor along with the substitute parents and child assess ways to correct the problem. If problems are not corrected and the substitute family continues to request removal, a conference should be held by the Family Services counselor with the substitute family and child to discuss the possibility of removal and replacement. Involving the child in the planning may help him/her feel he/she has some control of his/her life.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE BILATERAL SERVICE AGREEMENT

The Bilateral Service Agreement is for use between the Department, a Community Based Care Lead Agency, or a Contract Case Management Provider and a Foster Parent.

The licensing counselor must:

A. At Initial Licensure

1. Review the Bilateral Service Agreement with each newly licensed foster parent, secure the signature of each parent on the document, and sign the agreement on behalf of the department.
2. File the original agreement in the licensing file and provide a copy to the foster parent(s).
3. Provide a copy of the following documents to the foster parent and explain each:
 - A. Attachment A: Safety and Discipline Policies
 - B. Family Services Counselor's Review of Foster Parent(s) Performance, CF-FSP 5223
 - C. Foster Parent's Review of Family Services Counselor Performance, CF-FSP 5224
 - D. Quality of Foster Home: Community Input, CF-FSP 5225
 - E. Child Service Agreement, CF-FSP 5227

B. At Re-licensure

1. Review the Bilateral Service Agreement with each foster parent at the time of re-licensure, ask for comments and concerns, secure the signature of each parent on the Re-Licensure Bilateral Service Agreement Signature Page, and sign the document on behalf of the department.
2. Address any concerns/issues noted by the family.
3. File the original in the licensing file, and provide a copy to the foster provider.
4. Provide a copy of the Family Services Counselor's Review of Foster Parents Performance form to each counselor who has worked with a child in the home during the past year.
5. Review the input provided and address concerns as needed. File the completed forms in the licensing file.
6. Provide copies of the Quality of Foster Home: Community Input form, to individuals within community who have interacted with the child and/or foster provider within the past year. (Examples: GUARDIAN AD LITEM, service providers, school, etc)
7. Review the input provided and address concerns as needed. File copies of completed forms in the licensing file.



Any Counselor who places a child must:

A. At the time of placement of a child:

1. Complete the Child Service Agreement.
2. Ask the foster parents to sign and date the agreement.
3. Sign and date the agreement on behalf of the agency.
4. Provide a copy to the foster parents and place the original in the child's case file.

B. At the time a child leaves a foster home:

1. Provide a copy of the Foster Parent's Review of the Family Services Counselor's Performance form to the foster parent(s) at the time a child departs from the home (for a children in the home for 30 days or more) and request that it be completed and mailed to the Family Services counselor's supervisor.
2. The completed form must be reviewed by the Family Services counselor's supervisor for feedback and to address concerns, and then placed in the counselor's file.