

THE CARITAS FAMILY SOLUTIONS' FOSTER PARENT LAW

What you need to know about Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities



At Caritas Family Solutions, we believe that foster parents are the most vital parts of our Foster Care Program. Without foster parents, there is no Foster Care Program.



The purpose of reviewing the Foster Parent Law is to emphasize the critical relationship between foster parents and foster care case managers and how leads to the safe and supportive transition of children in foster care and their successful development.

Being informed about the different roles and responsibilities can help decrease time spent managing misunderstandings and may help encourage building a stronger working relationship with a clear goal.

FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS

1. Dignity, Respect & Consideration

Caritas Family Solutions recognizes the value of our foster parents and makes every effort to treat them with respect and dignity as professional members of the child welfare team.

- ❖ Foster parents are encouraged to provide input in the agency's service design and decisions for the child in care.
- ❖ The agency seeks to empower foster parents through education surrounding self-advocacy and have added position of Foster Home Resource and Support Coordinator for the purpose of developing programs to support foster parents.
- ❖ Foster care case managers include foster parents in decision making surrounding the youth placed in their care and take into consideration all input.
- ❖ Foster parents receive the support of the child welfare team including including case manager, therapist, licensing specialist, supervisor, etc.

Dignity, Respect & Consideration

Open communication is key to maintaining the dignity and respect of foster families. Therefore, case managers are trained to cultivate relationships with their foster families. Communication is promoted in the following way:

- ❖ All phone calls are returned within 48 hours
- ❖ Case managers provide alternate contact numbers when out of office
- ❖ An after hours on-call emergency number is available 24/7/365

After Hours On-Call Emergency Number

Belleville Region: 618-616-7444

East Alton Region: 618-806-4195

Mt. Vernon/Effingham Region: 618-731-4008

Cartersville Region: 618-967-4653

Dignity, Respect & Consideration

Foster parents are encouraged to participate actively in the case of the youth in their care.

- ❖ **COURT:** Foster parents are informed of all upcoming court dates and times. Foster parents should be provided the name and contact information for the GAL of the youth in care.
- ❖ **OTHER MEETINGS:** Foster Parents are included in Administrative Case Reviews and in Child and Family Team Meetings with the agreement of birth parents. Specialized Foster Parents are included in monthly staffings and case planning. Case managers should strive to accommodate the foster parent's schedule if they are interested in attending.
- ❖ **DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS:** All conversations between case managers and foster parents should start with strength-based approaches, focusing on the successes and encouraging a collaborative approach to identified challenges or issues.

2. Standardized and Ongoing Training

- ❖ Pre-Service Training = Foster & Adopt PRIDE (the prerequisite for licensure)
 - ❖ Relatives/Fictive Kin Caregivers participate in 6-hour Home of Relative PRIDE
 - ❖ Traditional Caregivers participate in a 39-hour PRIDE
- ❖ In-Service Training = Any DCFS approved training taken AFTER licensure that will count towards a foster parent's required training hours.
Examples include:
 - ❖ Specialized Foster Parent Training-16 hours
 - ❖ Educational Advocacy-6 hours
 - ❖ Adoption Conversion-10 hours
- ❖ All licensed foster parents are required to complete 16.0 credit hours of in-service training WITHIN their 4-year license period.
- ❖ Specialized foster parents are required to complete 16.0 credit hours PER YEAR of in-service training. 4 years x 16.0 hours = 64.0 hours.
- ❖ Homes with an expanded capacity must complete 9.0 hours of training per calendar year.

Additional Training Opportunities

- ❖ Caritas Family Solutions offers trainings-(CPR, Specialized Training, Foster Parent Support Group, etc.)
- ❖ The DCFS Virtual Training Center-(Educational Advocacy, Adoption Conversion, etc.)
- ❖ All upcoming area trainings can be found in the quarterly Foster Parent Newsletter by DCFS
- ❖ The QPI website-qpicalaforia.org
- ❖ Ask your licensing specialist!

3. Supportive Services

- ❖ Foster families are provided with contact information for staff relevant to the case of the youth in their care including case manager, supervisor, etc., as well as the appropriate chain of command for reporting concerns.
- ❖ Foster parents are educated regarding the availability of services for youth in care such as Intensive Placement Stabilization services (IPS), Women Infant and Children (WIC), etc.
- ❖ Foster families are provided with the CARES number and instructions on when it is appropriate to use it.
- ❖ Caritas Family Solutions connect foster families to regional supports including the Restore Network and the Family Resource Center of Southern Illinois.
- ❖ Foster Parent Mentors can add another layer of support for foster parents who are new to navigating the system to assure that all foster parents can access the needed supports.

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4. Reimbursement

BOARD PAYMENTS:

- ❖ Board payments are paid by Caritas Family Solutions
 - ❖ Board checks are mailed out no later than the 25th of every month
 - ❖ Foster Parents should contact their case manager or licensing specialist regarding board payment issues.
 - ❖ Checks cannot be reissued within two weeks.

OTHER PAYMENTS:

- ❖ Reimbursement for any additional expenses submitted by the foster parent must be:
 - ❖ Approved by the case manager and supervisor
 - ❖ In accordance with the Foster Care Program Plan

These would include things such as mileage, respite for specialized foster care homes, special services fees, recreational fees, and licensure expense reimbursement.

5. Placement Plan

The Caritas Foster Parent Placement Agreement

Licensing specialist discuss this document with foster parents while in the process of licensure. It is signed by the foster parent and licensing specialist and is kept in the Foster Family Home Licensing File. This agreement, made between the foster parent and the agency, includes many specific statements pertaining to the expectation of foster parents during their care of a foster care child: *(6 examples of the 19 total agreement statements)*

- ❖ Support the child's permanency goal
- ❖ Support relationships with family
- ❖ Provide transportation to medical appointments
- ❖ Support visitation plans
- ❖ Keep medication logs
- ❖ Provide two weeks of removal notice (30 days for youth in specialized foster care)

Participation in Service Planning

Foster parents are encouraged by the case manager to participate in the development of future service plans in the following ways:

- ❖ Offering personal recommendations
- ❖ Attendance at Annual Case Reviews
- ❖ Participation in Child and Family Team Meetings with support of birth parents
- ❖ Involvement in the Integrated Assessment
- ❖ Participation in the IEP/IFSP when applicable
- ❖ Participation in all other appropriate meetings
- ❖ Taking an active role in visitation plans

Written Notification

❖ Notification of ACRs

- ❖ Foster parents shall receive timely written notification of the next ACR.

❖ Notice of Decision

- ❖ Foster parents shall be provided with a Notice of Decision 14 days prior to the movement of a child (except in cases where a Child Abuse Investigation is pending, and/or child is believed to be at risk of harm)
- ❖ Caseworkers must inform the foster parent of their right to appeal a removal decision.

❖ Child's Client Service Plan

- ❖ Foster parents shall receive the child's most recent client service plan from the caseworker. This should be thoroughly discussed with the foster parents to ensure understanding. If a youth is initially entering care, foster parents will participate in an Integrative Assessment. Furthermore, foster parents should be encouraged to participate in the development of any future service plans.

6. Licensing Investigations

CONCURRENT INVESTIGATIONS

Concurrent investigations occur when a hotline call has been made to the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline. This involves DCFS Child Protective Services and licensing.

STAND-ALONE INVESTIGATIONS

Stand-alone investigations involve investigation of foster parents for violating one or more licensing standards. This involves licensing only.

Concurrent Licensing and DCP Investigation

- ❖ Foster care case managers must immediately communicate to licensing any information regarding the CA/N (Child Abuse and Neglect) Investigation from the DCP Investigator or other sources to ensure maximum cooperation and collaboration.
- ❖ Foster care case managers do not discuss fault or conduct their own interview relating to the allegations of a CA/N or Licensing Investigation. Child interviews are conducted by the DCP Investigator unless directly delegated to the case manager by the investigator for reasons of obtaining better information because of rapport.
- ❖ Foster care case managers cannot disclose any information regarding any allegations or findings of a CA/N or Licensing Investigation with subsequent foster parents or anyone else other than appropriate professionals.

Stand-Alone Licensing Complaint Investigations

- ❖ A child's case manager is required to report any concerning behavior or environmental issues that occur during interaction with a foster parent to licensing so that an investigation can be initiated if deemed necessary.
- ❖ Case managers should treat a Stand-Alone Investigation the same way a Concurrent DCP/Licensing Investigation is handled to assure there are no violations to any foster parent rights.

Rights of Foster Parents Under Investigation

- ❖ The right for the investigation to be fair, timely, and impartial
- ❖ The right to an advocate of their choosing present during any licensing interviews
- ❖ The right to receive mediation or administrative reviews of the finding decision or outcome
- ❖ The right to have their Corrective Plan (plan to correct any violated licensing standards) specifically explained to them and an opportunity to provide input for it

7. Additional Information about Children

- ❖ It is the responsibility of case managers to provide foster parents with all information required by the CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with Caregiver at placement.
- ❖ Over the life of the case, relevant information essential for foster parents to support the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the youth in care will be provided to the foster parents and noted in SACWIS.
- ❖ All information shared with foster parents must fall within appropriate boundaries of confidentiality.

8. Placement Information About Children

- ❖ All information required by the CFS 600-4 *Sharing Information with the Caregiver*.
 - ❖ Case Information and History
 - ❖ Health and Medical History
 - ❖ Educational Information and History
 - ❖ Placement History
 - ❖ Behavioral and Social Information and History
- ❖ This information should be shared prior to placement if possible. In the case of an emergency placement, the child's case manager should provide this information as it becomes available. Written verification must be provided within 10 business days.
- ❖ Each child entering care is provided with a Life Book that should travel with the child throughout his/her time in care to collect important information.

9. Notification of Meetings and Foster Parent Input

- ❖ Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in meetings and staffings concerning children in their care including:
 - ❖ ACRs
 - ❖ Service planning meetings
 - ❖ Child and Family Team Meetings (with birth parent consent)
 - ❖ Court hearings
 - ❖ IEP/IFSP meetings
 - ❖ Family visits/(with biological parent consent and/or agency consent)

- ❖ Case managers are required to notify foster parents of such meetings. Appropriate notification includes:
 - ❖ Notification 14 days prior to meetings, hearings, etc.
 - ❖ Consideration of foster parents' schedule
 - ❖ Option to participate via speaker phone or video conference when available

Foster Parent Input

- ❖ Foster parents should share information they have documented through medication logs and behavior logs to assist in case planning.
- ❖ Foster parents can make many decisions regarding youth in care's educational needs and sign consents for educational evaluations.
- ❖ All input from foster parents is considered in the same manner as information/recommendations presented by other members of the youth's team.
- ❖ Case managers must advise foster parents of their right to appeal decisions according to Rule 337, Service Appeals.

10. Information Regarding Children and their Families

PRIOR TO PLACEMENT

- ❖ Provide all known child specific information during the initial placement call
- ❖ Encourage foster parents to review the child's referral packet
- ❖ Provide the foster parents with "Let Me Tell You About My Child" from the biological parent(s)

DURING PLACEMENT

- ❖ Ensure that foster parents are made aware of any changes in case planning or visitation planning as soon as possible
- ❖ Communicate all information from other providers or professionals regarding the child
- ❖ Communicate all court decisions that affect the child's case and outlook of the case

Considering Confidentiality

Although a foster parent may find it helpful to know more information about a birth parent(s), it is important to keep in mind, that the child's case manager is bound by laws of confidentiality.

When a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the child's family, the child's family may consent to additional disclosures. Encouraging this type of relationship will provide an atmosphere of a team approach to family rehabilitation, which is the Department's ultimate goal.

11. Notice of Decision

Foster parents have a right to be given reasonable written notice regarding:

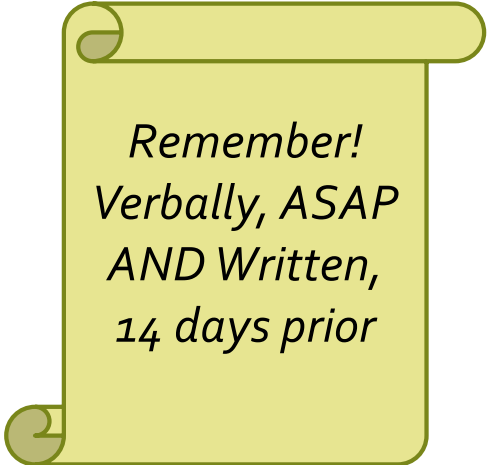
- ❖ Any change in a child's case plan
- ❖ Plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster parent
- ❖ The reasons for the change or termination in placement.

The notice shall be waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

Changes in Case Planning

Some Examples Include:

- A child has recently been stepped up to specialized care
- The child's goal has recently been changed from return home to adoption
- A child's visitation plans have been changed, for example, from 4 hours a week to overnight visitation



*Remember!
Verbally, ASAP
AND Written,
14 days prior*

Change of Placement

- ❖ Foster parents receive notification at least fourteen days prior to a change in placement.
- ❖ Appropriate timelines for notification should be followed except in instances when a child is at imminent risk of harm or in accordance with a court order. In such instances, verbal notification regarding placement change is followed by the Notice of Decision from the foster care case manager and supervisor.
- ❖ The risk can be deemed by the child case manager, the supervisor, or a DCFS Child Protection Specialist (investigator).
- ❖ Caritas Family Solutions strives to implement a transition plan when a placement change is needed for a youth in care whenever possible to reduce the impact of trauma on the youth and the foster family.

Appeal Rights

Notice of Decision

The foster parent has the right to appeal this decision by:

- ❖ Requesting mediation and/or a fair hearing
- ❖ Request must be made in writing within 45 days of the notice and sent to the Administrative Hearings Unit

Notice of Change of Placement

The foster parent has the right to appeal this decision by:

- ❖ Requesting a Clinical Placement Review
- ❖ Request can be made immediately by telephone or by fax within 3 business days to the DCFS Clinical Placement Review Team

12. Notification of Court Hearings

Notification

- Case managers are required to notify foster parents of date, time and location of all court hearings.
- Notification of court should occur at least fourteen days prior to court date.

Participation

- ❖ Case managers are required to provide the contact information for the youth in care's GAL to the foster parents and advise them of their right to contact the GAL regarding the progress of the youth in their home.
- ❖ Foster parents are informed of appropriate intervention strategies and their rights in court via case managers, training and the Foster Parent Handbook.

13. Consideration as a Placement Option when a Child Re-enters Care

When a child re-enters care, Caritas Family Solutions always attempts to place the child with his/her previous foster parent providing that the placement is in the best interest of the child. The foster care supervisor ensures that previous foster parents are considered as the first placement option dependent upon:

- ❖ Licensing capacity
- ❖ The foster parents' ability or desire to care for the child
- ❖ The child's previous progress and adjustment in the home

If the child is not re-placed in the previous foster home, a Critical Decision is completed which documents the reasoning and is placed in the child's case file.

14. Appeal Process

Licensing staff provide foster parents with appeal documents at the beginning of the licensing process. The appeal documents and information provided to foster parents include:

- ❖ CFS 1050-32, The Service Appeal Process
- ❖ The Caritas Foster Parent Grievance Procedure
- ❖ Information located within the Foster Parent Handbook

All staff should be familiar with and able to assist foster parents in understanding their rights to appeal agency decisions as well as in navigating grievance proceedings.

Foster parents who feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed are encouraged to contact the Advocacy Office at 1-800-232-3798.

15. Foster Parent Hotline

When encountering disagreements or experiencing conflict, follow the chain of command to issue a complaint.

- ❖ Foster parents should be provided with the name of the case manager's supervisor. If tension still exists, the Associate Director of Foster Care may be contacted.
- ❖ If the foster parent believes that the agency has violated Foster Parent Law, a grievance can be filed following the grievance procedure with Angela Barnes, Director of Quality Improvement and Compliance.

Angela.Barnes@caritasfamily.org

- ❖ Foster parents may seek further support by contacting the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-722-9124 or the Advocacy Office at 1-800-232-3798.

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Communication and Information Sharing

As members of the foster care team, foster parents are trained and expected to be honest and open about any detail related to the youth in care's life, adjustment issues, emotional well-being, physical well-being, education, behavior, etc. The agency assist foster parent by providing:

- ❖ An atmosphere of open communication and personal rapport
- ❖ Frequent contact with the child welfare team via phone, e-mail, in home visits, etc.
- ❖ Behavioral logs (when applicable)
- ❖ Contact information for all members of the child's foster care team.

Caritas Family Solutions survey foster families quarterly to measure efforts and enhance the quality of our communication.

2. Confidentiality

- ❖ Foster parents are trained in confidentiality regulations during PRIDE
- ❖ Foster parents are also required to read and sign the *Caritas Foster Home Confidentiality Agreement* and the *Caritas Foster Home Placement Agreement* as a part of licensure
- ❖ Confidentiality is discussed at semi-annual licensing monitoring visits conducted by licensing specialist
- ❖ Foster parents may refer to agency staff for questions surrounding confidentiality

3. Advocate for Children

Foster parents are charged with being “the voice” for youth in care to ensure that necessary services such as special education, therapy, etc. are requested and evaluated by the child welfare team and other necessary professionals.

- ❖ Foster parents attend Educational Advocacy training to increase their advocacy skills
- ❖ Foster parents are recognized as the primary educational advocate of youth in care
- ❖ Foster parents should ensure that youth in care participate in needed services

Promoting Foster Parents as Advocates

Case managers can encourage foster parents in their role as advocates by:

- ❖ Keeping an open line of communication with frequent contact and good rapport
- ❖ Helping foster parents gain greater knowledge of the child welfare system as a whole
- ❖ Helping foster parents understand their rights regarding court hearings
- ❖ Encouraging foster parents to be involved in ACRs, CIPPs, etc.
- ❖ Ensuring that foster parents are aware of appeal processes

4. Treating Children and Families with Dignity and Respect

- ❖ Foster parents learn the value of treating the child and the child's family with dignity and respect during PRIDE training
- ❖ Foster parents are also encouraged to attend trainings on separation and loss, reunification, and supporting familial relationships offered through DCFS and the agency
- ❖ It is critical to keeping this right and responsibility in mind when dealing with emotion filled situations

5. Strengths and Limitations of Foster Parents

In an effort to promote placement stabilization, Caritas Family Solutions makes every effort to “match” children with foster parents and families who possess the necessary strengths to provide the best available care for each individual child.

Licensing specialists track and monitor feedback from foster parents regarding placement preferences, strengths, and challenges including:

- ❖ Feedback from PRIDE trainers
- ❖ Feedback from case managers
- ❖ Foster parents’ reports to licensing specialist regarding the children in their home
- ❖ Foster parents’ own expressions of preferences

Support Prior to and After Placement

- ❖ Foster parents are encouraged to be open about their own feelings without the threat of retaliation
- ❖ Licensing staff identify the foster parents' support needs as they relate to the children in their home
- ❖ When making an initial placement call to a foster parent, agency staff will share with the foster parent all known information
- ❖ The agency offers training in trauma, attachment, and child development to help ensure placement stabilization.

6. Supplemental Support

- ❖ Support groups are offered monthly via Zoom and in person (when appropriate) in each region. Foster parents request training topics.
- ❖ Foster Parents are encouraged to connect via social media at Caritas Foster Support for updates on policy, scheduled trainings, and support.
- ❖ The Foster Parent Law Implementation Committee review and plan for changes to the implementation plan yearly.
- ❖ Foster parents are encouraged to join the Restore Network and are made aware of regional supports.
- ❖ Foster parents may participate in the Foster Parent Advisory Board.

Caritas has thriving and support groups! Foster parents are encouraged to attend!

7. Foster Parent Trainings

Foster parents are responsible for assessing their own training needs. The agency assists foster parents by:

- ❖ Surveying foster parents surrounding training needs
- ❖ Evaluating recommendations from licensing, case managers, supervisors, etc.
- ❖ Responding to post-training evaluations
- ❖ Designing trainings to keep foster parents updated on current policy and procedure

8. Preventing Placement Disruption

Foster parents can prevent placement disruptions by:

- ❖ Utilizing respite
- ❖ Expressing concerns to case managers and licensing specialist early on
- ❖ Requesting placement stabilization services
- ❖ Attending support groups
- ❖ Utilizing their personal support system

Foster care staff are trained to identify children whose needs may rise to a level of specialized care and how to refer such cases for a CIPP review.

9. Impact of Fostering & Stress Management

- ❖ Foster parents are introduced in PRIDE to stressors that may be introduced to the family structure through fostering
- ❖ Licensing specialist and foster parents collaborate during the home study to identify specific stressors that may be barriers to the family
- ❖ Foster parents and licensing workers have on-going conversations about family stress and adjustment at monitoring visits
- ❖ Caritas Family Solutions offers counseling services to foster parents who are having difficulty dealing with the stress of fostering (on a case by case basis)
- ❖ Foster parents also have the option to be put on Inactive Status if they need to take “a break” from foster care

10. Rewards of Fostering

Foster parents are encouraged to share positive foster parenting experiences with one another and to act as positive supports. The agency can support foster parents in meeting this responsibility by:

- ❖ Offering training on the benefits and rewards of fostering through PRIDE training
- ❖ Encouraging and recognizing the role of foster parents
- ❖ Encouraging foster parents to participate in recruitment activity
- ❖ Encouraging foster parents to lead trainings and act as mentors
- ❖ Encouraging foster parents to participate in support groups

11. Role, Rights, and Responsibilities

Foster parents are educated on the roles of the professional team:

- ❖ During PRIDE Training
- ❖ While participating in licensure

Foster parents are provided with an updated implementation plan each year which discusses how the agency will implement the rights and responsibilities of the Foster Parent Law.

- ❖ Foster parents are asked to participate on the implementation committee to assist in updating the plan yearly.
- ❖ Foster Parent Law Training is provided annually to review the implementation plan and Foster Parent Law.

12. Mandated Reporter Responsibility

Mandated Reporting

- ❖ Foster parents are trained in PRIDE regarding their responsibility as a mandated reporter.
- ❖ Foster parents are also required to read and sign the CANTS 22B form, Mandated Reporter Status.

Investigations

- ❖ Licensing specialist educate the foster parent regarding the agency's investigation procedure during licensure
- ❖ When a foster parents is under investigation, they are given the brochure entitled, "What You Need To Know About Licensing Complaint Investigations"
- ❖ The agency offers training regarding investigation procedure

13. Notification and Participation in Meetings

- ❖ PRIDE training emphasizes that foster parents take an active role in court proceedings, administrative case reviews, service planning, etc.
- ❖ The entire child welfare team should stress to the foster parent the importance of their participation
- ❖ Foster care staff and foster parent mentors are available to provide information regarding the court process and other pertinent information during the life of the case.

14. Appeal Procedure

- ❖ Appeal and grievance procedures are discussed with foster parents as part of initial licensure.
- ❖ Foster parents are provided written documentation by the licensing specialist on the appeals procedure and the agency's grievance process at the time of initial licensure in the Foster Parent Folder
- ❖ Foster parents are informed of their ability to contact the advocacy office in the event they feel that their grievance has not been addressed adequately.

15. Accurate and Relevant Child Records

Training provided through PRIDE and the child welfare team helps foster parents understand what records should be maintained. These records should be monitored by case managers and licensing specialist during in-home visits. The records that foster parents are required to keep include but are not limited to:

- ❖ Clothing receipts
- ❖ Distribution of child's allowance
- ❖ Medication logs
- ❖ School and medical records
- ❖ Inventory of child's personal belongings

Each youth in care is provided with a Life Book upon initial placement in care. It is the responsibility of a foster parent to assist the youth in updating the Life Book and ensuring that it accompanies the youth to future placements.

16. Sharing Information with Subsequent Caregivers

- ❖ Per Policy Interpretation 2000.15 issued in November 2000, information from one caregiver to another should only be shared through the case manager
- ❖ Casework staff should encourage and expect the foster parent to share all relevant information in the effort to enhance adjustment and stabilization
- ❖ The child's folder and Life Book should accompany the child to all subsequent placements including a return home
- ❖ Child and Family Team Meetings are a good place for the foster parent and biological parent to share information with each other regarding the child

17. Cultural Support

- ❖ Foster parents are introduced to the unique challenges youth in care face surrounding positive development of sexual, cultural and racial identity during PRIDE training
- ❖ Foster parents accepting placement of children from races and cultures other their own are connected with peer support.
- ❖ The agency supports community involvement and making placement decisions based on the child's neighborhood of origin.
- ❖ Foster parents are encouraged to take advantage of on-going cultural awareness and reunification training as well as cultural events in the community.

Thank you for your time !

To take the quiz and gain credit for participating in this workshop, please click here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FPLaw2020>