

Division of Children and Family Services Protection and Safety Procedure #33-2015	
Regarding:	Support of DCFS Foster Homes
Date Effective:	December 1, 2015
Contact:	Jodi Allen at jodi.allen@nebraska.gov or 402-471-6288
Issue by:	Douglas Weinberg, Director, Division of Children and Family Services



Philosophy:

When licensed or approved foster homes are solely supported by the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the responsibility for the foster home and the children placed in the foster home, is the joint responsibility of both the Resource Development Worker assigned to the home and the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) assigned to the child or children in placement in the foster home.

Procedure:

All foster homes solely supported by DCFS shall be supported by the assigned DCFS Resource Development Worker. When a child (ren) is/are placed in the foster home, the foster home shall be supported by both the assigned Resource Development Worker and the assigned CFSS.

DCFS shall be accessible and responsive to foster families in meeting their needs and intervening as necessary to stabilize crisis episodes and prevent placement disruptions. This may include support and contact outside of regular business hours by an after-hours on-call CFSS. This support shall be accessible to the foster parent through initial contact with the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

Support includes providing face-to-face visits in the foster parent's home, telephone calls and email and shall occur as needed based on the needs of the foster parent and/or the child and as determined by the Family Strength and Needs Assessment (FSNA) Tool, the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool (NCR), or as identified in the support plan.

The CFSS shall do the following during the monthly face to face contacts:

Conduct a minimum of one monthly face to face contact with the child (ren) placed in foster care and one face to face contact per month with the foster parent(s). Every other month, the visit with the child and the foster parent(s) must be in the foster parent's home. A Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessment is not required during this contact UNLESS a safety concern is identified.

The CFSS shall do the following on a monthly basis:

1. Observe the child, the foster parent(s) and the physical environment (when the visit is in the home), to determine the safety and suitability of the child's placement with the foster parent. Suitability concerns should be reported

2. within 24 hours to the CFSS Supervisor and assigned Resource Development Worker.
3. When there are safety concerns, they should be addressed during the visit and/or called in to the child abuse/neglect hotline as soon as possible, and
4. Discuss the child's health status including any recent treatment, unmet medical needs and current medications, and
5. Discuss school performance, educational plan, and
6. Discuss peer relationships or needs, and
7. Discuss visitation with parents and siblings, and identify any needs the foster parent(s) may be experiencing related to the visitation plan, and problem solve with the foster parent(s) to resolve, and
8. Discuss status of the court process and family progress, and
9. Discuss issues, concerns and/or needs of the foster parent(s), and
10. Document observations and discussion within the CFS program case under the Detail Program Case contact narrative, and
11. Notify the Resource Development Worker within five business days, or sooner if required, via email of any needs related to the foster parent(s), (such as training opportunities needed or concrete items for the foster home), and coordinate with the Resource Development Worker to assist in meeting identified concrete needs.

The CFSS shall do the following on an as needed basis:

1. Participate in the development and monitoring of the Foster Parent Support Plan with the foster parent(s) and Resource Development Worker.
2. Complete the NCR with the foster parent(s) at designated times and at the foster parent's request.
3. Encourage foster parent(s) and youth to complete the "caregiver information form" and the "youth questionnaire form" and submit the completed forms to the court, prior to the youth's review hearing and permanency hearing.
4. Discuss the opportunities where the foster parent(s) has/have exercised or could exercise the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

The Resource Development Worker shall:

1. Conduct a minimum of one monthly telephone call to the foster parent(s) and document the conversation within the foster parent organization and the CFS program case,

2. Discuss needs the foster parent(s) may have as identified by the CFSS or the foster parent. This may include:
 - a. Review the support plan, make changes as needed and provide a copy to the CFSS and foster parent(s), with all signatures.
 - b. When transportation needs occur, assist in identifying informal supports and work with CFSS to remove barriers.
 - c. Discuss the concrete items needed for the care of the child in their home, such as a crib, door alarms, etc.
 - d. Document within the CFS program case (detail program case, narrative contact) and the foster parent organization contact narrative within five business days, along with sending narrative via email to the CFSS assigned (note that this may require documentation within multiple CFS program cases, dependent on the children residing in the home), and
3. Develop the Foster Parent Support Plan with the foster parent(s) and the CFSS within 7 business days of placement and coordinate with the CFSS as necessary. Scan the signed support plan into the foster parent organization, review the support plan monthly to make revisions as needed, and
4. Discuss any stressors the foster parent(s) may be experiencing that could be impacting their ability to effectively parent and care for the child (ren) and explore strategies that could be used to minimize or reduce the stressors. Document the identified stressors and needs in the foster home organization on N-Focus and share with the CFSS within 24 hours, and
5. Identify appropriate respite care options and:
 - a. Conduct necessary background checks on prospective respite care providers if necessary within the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards, and
 - b. Document the results within the CFS program case and assist in coordinating a smooth transition for the child or children to and from the respite care home, and
6. Encourage and facilitate the use of respite care and educate foster parent(s) on the importance of accepting foster children back into their care after respite care in order to avoid the additional trauma to children from sudden and unplanned placement changes, and
7. For Licensed Foster Homes, complete all licensing work including referring foster parent(s) to ongoing training resources, and
8. For Relative and Kinship Foster Homes, tailor the support plan and education/training to the unique and individual circumstances, provide education and information around economic assistance the home may be eligible for including food stamps, WIC and other community resources, and

9. Provide or arrange for foster parent(s) to receive ongoing training and/or one-on-one instruction and guidance including:
 - a. Support from the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, as needed.
 - b. Assist the family with promoting “normalcy” for children in their care through the use of the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard that provides opportunities for children to grow emotionally, culturally, socially, and developmentally by having the most family-like experience possible; and,
 - c. Assist the foster parent(s) with accessing other resources, and assist with payment reimbursement questions.

References:

Protection and Safety Procedure Update #8-2014