

Definitions for Common Phrases

- **Adoption:** If the parent's rights are terminated, a child will be available for adoption. Foster parents can adopt foster children in some circumstances. Relatives are also able to adopt children whose parent's rights are permanently terminated.
- **Alternative Response:** Alternative Response is an approach to working with families to safely care for children in their own homes and communities. This program is a different way to respond to allegations of abuse or neglect so children can stay in their homes.
- **Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association:** The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, NFAPA, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, was formed in 1999 to increase the amount of information, resources and support available to Nebraska's foster and adoptive families.
- **Case management:** The ongoing follow-up and review of the safety and well-being of a child who has been removed from parents or caregivers. A child who is in out-of-home care will see a case manager at least once a month, and the case manager will work with the parents, the child and the child's current caregivers to determine the best interests of the child.
- **Case plan:** The court document that all parents or caregivers of dependent children must follow. Case plans have goals for the parents and the child so that the parents can reunify with the child and safely care for the child.
- **Child Protection Team:** Conducts forensic interviews and medical exams of children to determine if they have been abused or neglected.
- **Child protective investigation:** These investigations are handled by CFS child protective investigators whenever an allegation of abuse, neglect or abandonment is made to the Nebraska Abuse and Neglect Hotline. The investigations typically last up to 60 days.
- **Child Welfare Professional:** An individual who is primarily responsible for case activities that has met the criteria for Nebraska Certification as a Child Protective Investigator, Case Manager or Licensing Counselor.
- **Initial Assessment Worker (IA):** An IA checks into allegations of abuse, neglect and abandonment of children by their caregivers. The investigator will interview the child, caregivers, and other contacts to determine if the child is safe or not. If a child is not safe, the IA can remove the child from the home.
- **Dependency court:** The court system in Nebraska that makes decisions regarding the best interests and welfare of children who must be removed from their homes.
- **Dependent child:** A child who has been removed from their home and needs to be under state supervision. This child could live with a relative, non-relative or in foster care.
- **Fictive Kin:** An individual who is unrelated to the child by either birth or marriage but has such a close, emotional relationship with the child that he or she may be considered part of the family (e.g. godparents, close family friends).
- **Nebraska Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline:** Any person in Nebraska who suspects a child is being abused, neglected or abandoned by a caregiver, or who suspects a child has been a victim of any crime, must report that information to the Nebraska Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. The Hotline number is 1-800-652-1999.
- **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services:** The state agency that manages services to families, including investigating child abuse, managing child welfare cases,

substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and providing federal benefits like Medicaid and food assistance.

- **Foster care:** Licensed foster care is made up of individuals or families who are able to take dependent children into their homes. Foster homes are licensed and inspected regularly, and foster parents go through a rigorous interview process before being approved.
- **Foster child:** A foster child is a dependent child who has been removed from their parent or guardian and is living in a licensed foster home.
- **Foster parent:** A foster parent has been through a rigorous interview process to determine if they can safely care for abused and neglected children in their home. Foster parents are paid a monthly stipend to help cover the costs of the needs of the child, but this funding will generally not pay for everything a foster child needs.
- **Group home:** A group home is a home for several foster children that is licensed by the state. Group homes are run either by house parents who live with the children or by shift staff who transfer in and out every 24 hours.
- **Guardian ad Litem:** A volunteer advocate for a dependent child in court. This advocate is represented by an attorney and speaks to the judge on behalf of the child they represent.
- **Home study:** All prospective foster parents must undergo a home study, which determines if the home has enough space and is safe for a foster child to live in.
- **Independent Living (B2i):** Program for teens in foster care that prepares them for adult life.
- **In-home care:** Some children are under state supervision but are able to safely remain in their own homes with regular case management.
- **Licensing:** The licensing process includes interviews with prospective foster parents, a home study and a review of financial records, among other things.
- **Medicaid:** The federal program that funds health insurance for low-income families. Medicaid provides the health and dental care that is needed for children in foster care.
- **Non-relative placement:** A child who has been removed from their parent or guardian and placed with a family friend. Non-relatives are not eligible for additional funding.
- **Out-of-home care:** This term includes all children who have been removed from their home and are living with a relative, non-relative or in foster care.
- **Permanent guardianship:** Many children will be placed in permanent guardianship, usually with appropriate relatives, if the parent's rights have not been terminated but the child cannot safely return home.
- **Pre-service training:** Between 20 and 30 hours of training is required to become a licensed foster parent. This training helps the foster parent understand the background of children who have been abused and neglected and learn ways to deal with their behaviors.
- **Relative placement:** A child who has been removed from their parent or guardian and placed with a relative. Relatives can get some funding to help with the child's expenses through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.
- **Reunification:** The process of returning a child who has been removed from the home to the parents or guardians and ensuring that the child will remain safe. The majority of children who are removed from their homes have reunification as their case plan goal.
- **Termination of parental rights:** This is a court decision made if the parents have committed an egregious act against a child or refuse to complete the case plan to show they will be able to safely care for their child.