



Richland County Children Services

Substitute Care Policies and Procedures

Manual for Agency Employees and Substitute Care Parents

Effective March 2020

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*Please note, some of these policies will not apply to kinship providers who are taking care of children in RCCS Custody. Those that are applicable will be noted with an *.

Welcome to the team!

I am pleased that you decided to join our efforts to make a difference in the life of a child.

Foster parents are the backbone of our placement network. You provide care on a twenty-four-hour basis for children. Thanks to all of you, children can experience a safe and stable family environment where their physical and emotional needs will be nurtured. You are also a vital source of day to day information regarding a child's behavior and progress.

Fostering children is a huge commitment. This will not be an easy job, and sometimes it will feel like a thankless one. Many of the children who enter the foster care system have experienced significant trauma. They tend to act out in various ways and for reasons you may not understand. Please do not take these behaviors personally. Children are often triggered to act this way due to past traumatic events, and they simply need to learn self-regulating techniques. We offer a lot of training to teach you how to recognize, react to and reduce these maladaptive behaviors.

Please remember we are at your service. Your caseworker and foster care worker have skilled training and knowledge of the Agency and other community resources. Please contact them when you know a problem is developing and you need help and/or advice.

The foster child placed in your care may be there for a temporary time or a longer period, depending on how long it takes for the child to reunify with their family. If reunification is not able to occur, other types of permanency plans will be considered for the child. These plans could include legal custody to a relative/foster parent or adoption by a relative/foster parent. Your caseworker and other individuals who are significant to the child will be working with you as a team to establish the best permanency plan possible.

Again, you are part of a team and we all want and need to support you! We must work together and establish positive working relationships. Our team "players" may include staff from Juvenile Court, RCCS staff, the school system staff, the child's parents, and other community service providers.

Thank you for helping to assure the safety, well-being and permanency of children who are at risk of abuse, neglect and dependency. Your commitment to caring for the child and/or children you foster means the world to them and to us!

Sincerely,

Nikki Harless, MSW, LISW-S

Executive Director

WHAT IS “FOSTER CARE”? WHAT IS “SUBSTITUTE CARE”?

Foster care is defined as temporary care to children who are unable to remain safely in their own homes or in a relative's home. Most children in foster care are under 18 years old. Adolescents 18 to 21 years old may be in foster care if they have significant developmental delays.

Substitute care is a broader term and includes children in agency custody whom are placed with foster parents or kin. Kinship parents are not paid a per diem, but may apply for and go through the process to become licensed foster parents if they meet the criteria of the program.

All children who are in “foster care” are in “substitute care”. However, not all children in “substitute care” are in “foster care”. References to “foster care” and “foster care providers” in the Manual apply only to those children and providers that are in or are providing foster care. References to “substitute care”, on the other hand, apply to all providers, including foster care providers.

The length of time a child will need to stay in a foster home varies in each situation. Placement begins when emergency or temporary custody of a child is granted to Richland County Children Services by the Juvenile Court and an approved least restrictive placement is selected by the Agency for the child.

GOALS OF FOSTER CARE

- To provide a safe, stable family environment for children who are separated from their primary families;
- To provide for the physical and emotional needs of children who are separated from their families;
- To work together as a team, the birth parents/family of origin, the substitute care providers, and social worker to identify and address the concerns leading to placement of the children out of their home;
- To reunify children with their own families as soon as it is safely possible. When necessary, to place children in other permanent arrangements (relative home, adoptive home or independent living). This goal is accomplished when social workers work directly with parents to alleviate problems or help change the circumstances, which led to the child's need for placement.

Case workers help the parents develop a step-by-step plan called a reunification plan, which is also known as the case plan. This plan specifies what the parents must do in order for the child to return home. The Juvenile Court approves the case plan. This is both a federal and state legal requirement of our Agency.

WHY DO CHILDREN ENTER FOSTER CARE?

Many different factors exist which make it difficult for a family to provide proper care of their child(ren). Some of these factors are:

- death of parent(s);

- mental or physical illness of parent(s);
- drug/alcohol use, abuse or addiction;
- inability/unwilling to learn parenting skills;
- incarceration of parent;
- special needs of the child;
- being overwhelmed or unable to parent;
- domestic violence between parents;
- medical needs of child;
- mental health needs of child; and/or
- behavioral challenges of child.

TYPES OF CUSTODY

The types of custody that the Juvenile Court may appoint to RCCS include:

- emergency custody (EMC);
- temporary custody (TC);
- planned permanent living arrangement (PPLA);
- permanent custody (PC); and
- permanent surrender.

There are also several different types of court hearings that come with each type of custody. Each case can take a different course through the Juvenile Court System, so it is important to speak to your assigned case worker about court hearings. The Richland County Juvenile Court also has a legal status it calls a Temporary Order of Temporary Custody (TOTC). These will generally later be made TC by the court.

PARENT/CHILD VISITATION

The primary goal of substitute care is to return the child to the parents as quickly as can safely be accomplished. Visits between the child and their parents are critical to reunify families. Parents retain the right to visit with their children unless there is a court order denying or limiting that right or unless the Agency has permanent custody of the child. Visits are particularly important to the child. Visitation helps the child to maintain a relationship with the parents, to retain their identity, to deal more realistically with the parent-child relationship, and to prepare for an eventual return to the family, if possible.

Visitation Schedule - the social worker will try to arrange the visits at a time, whenever possible, that is mutually convenient for the substitute care provider, the child, and the child's parents.

Circumstances may occur that require a change in the visitation arrangements. Changes must be made in advance, whenever possible, by calling the child's case worker. In order to facilitate reunification, visits are often multiple times per week and for a couple hours each time. It is best for the child and parents if the child can visit in his/her own home. Therefore, every effort will be made to facilitate visits in the parent's home.

Problems after visitation - visitation can be hard on everyone - the child, the child's parents and the substitute care family. Different problems can occur when the parents visit or do not visit. The child may return from the visit upset and with changed behavior. There are times when a child returns from a visit feeling angry and sullen, or withdrawn, sad or confused. At other times a child will return from a family visit and resume life in the substitute care family with no difficulty.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) RELATED RULE FOR CHILD VISITATION (OAC 5101:2-42-92)

The Agency is mandated to provide for each child the opportunity for regular and frequent visitation. A visitation schedule will be developed and contained in the case plan with the help of the child's parents or guardian and when age appropriate, the child. Whenever possible, visitation will occur multiple times per week in the least restrictive setting, which is ideally in the parent's home.

1. Frequency of visits is based on:

- The attitudes and feelings between the child and parent in the present relationship;
- Whether the case plan goal is reunification or alternative living arrangement;
- The need to maintain or enhance the bonding relationship between parent/guardian and child;
- What is determined to be in the child's best interest and is conducive to his/her physical and emotional well-being as well as court orders.

2. Duration of visits is based on:

- The amount of time needed to maintain or enhance the bonding relationship between the child and parent/guardian;
- A determination based on current relationship between child and parent on the length of a time that would be in the child's best interest as well as court orders.

3. Location of the visit will be in the least-restrictive setting consistent with the goals of the case plan. The order of least-restrictive to most-restrictive is as follows:

- Visitation in the home of the child's parent/guardian;
- Visitation in the home of a friend, relative, substitute caregiver or other non-institutional setting;
- Visitation at a community center with supervision;
- Visitation at the Agency;
- A location providing a safe setting for the child.

4. Restrictions on the frequency, duration, location and supervision are based on factors related to potential harm to the child, the child's special needs and the child's parent/guardian availability for longer visits. Supervised visitation means that an Agency approved representative (case worker, parent aide, etc.) is monitoring the visit.

FOSTER CAREGIVER RECRUITMENT

PURPOSE:

To ensure that RCCS is compliant with all relevant state and federal laws governing the process of recruitment.

POLICY STATEMENT:

All foster and adoptive home recruitment activities and materials will be in compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act, 42 U.S.C.A. 1996 (B), as amended by Section 1808 of the Inter-ethnic Adoption Provisions of the Small Business Jobs Protections Act of 1996, 110 STAT. 17 55, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (5101:2-42-48 to 5101:2-42-58 of the OAC 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, as amended, the Small Business Jobs Protections Act of 1996, and 42 U.S.C. 671 (A) the “Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997”. Recruitment activities are in compliance with all other federal and state mandates and laws.

PROCEDURES:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A) (2), the Agency will have a written plan describing strategies for foster caregiver recruitment that complies with the Multiethnic Placement Act, Octo 20, 1994, P.L. 103-382 as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, P.L. 104-188 (MEPA), and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) , as it applies to the foster care process. If the Agency amends its recruitment plan, the Agency shall be responsible for submitting the amended recruitment plan to JFS within 90 days of the plan change. The plan shall include:

- A description of the characteristics of foster children served by the Agency to include ages, developmental needs, emotional needs, physical needs, cultural, racial, and ethnic race, color and national origin backgrounds and levels of care needed;
- Diverse methods of disseminating general information regarding the children served by the Agency;
- Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community as defined by the Agency;
- Tracking statistics quarterly to include how the prospective foster parent was recruited;
- Strategies for assuring that prospective foster parents have access to the application process, including the flexibility of service to the community served by the Agency;
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities;
- Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers;
- Procedures for a timely search for foster parents, including the use of interagency efforts, provided that such procedures must ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate home is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement;
- A statement of assurance that all foster caregiver recruitment activities and materials shall be in compliance with MEPA and Title VI, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, et seq., as amended, and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997;
- No placements will be denied based on geographic location, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, national origin, handicap or age of the person or the child involved;

- No foster care giver application will be denied based on geographic location, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, national origin, handicap or age of the person or the child involved;
- The placement of children in the custody of Richland County Children Services will not be delayed or denied based on geographic location of the neighborhood of the prospective care giver whenever geography is being used as a proxy for the racial composition of the neighborhood, the demographics of the neighborhood, the presence or lack of presence of a significant number of a particular race, color, or national origin in the neighborhood or any similar purpose.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

The Program Manager is responsible for submitting the amended recruitment plan to JFS within 90 days of the plan change.

DEFINITIONS:

Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) – This Federal Act prohibits the delay or denial of any adoption or placement in foster care due to the race, color, or national origin of the child or of the foster or adoptive parents, and requires States to provide for diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom homes are needed.

FOSTER CAREGIVER ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A 4), the Agency defines additional assessment activities which are not specifically required by Chapter 5101:2-7 of the Administrative Code, and which will be considered as part of the home study process.

POLICY STATEMENT:

All potential Richland County Children Services foster and foster-to-adopt caregivers are assessed using a consistent set of tools and activities, which are approved by the Placement Supervisor and Program Manager.

PROCEDURES:

Foster and foster-to-adopt applicants will complete the JFS 01691 “Application for Child Placement”.

Applicants must be a legal resident of the United States and reside in the state of Ohio.

At least three home visits will be made to the prospective foster/adoptive parents’ home.

As part of the foster and foster/adoptive home study process the following additional assessment activities will be required of all applicants:

- Police/ Sheriff Department records check documentation;

- SACWIS records check of previous involvement as a client, foster care applicant, or adoptive parent applicant. Documentation of findings to be part of the foster care givers(s) file;
- FBI and BCI checks for all applicants and any household members over the age of 18 regardless of whether they lived in Ohio for the past five years;
- Conduct a search of the U.S. Dept of Justice National Sex Offender Public Website;
- Conduct a check on the CAN Registry of any other state the applicant may have resided in the past five years;
- Prospective parents must provide at least 4 non-related references, obtaining additional references if the applicant was previously certified as a foster caregiver or provided care and supervision to children through employment or volunteerism;
- Completion of a JFS 01348 “Safety Audit” of the foster home;
- All foster parents must have beds assembled and in place for the number of children they identify on their child characteristic checklist at the time the home study is approved;
- All records checks must be completed on identified substitute caregivers who will be caring for the child while the foster parent works or utilizes respite prior to the home study being approved;
- Records including 10 years of personal addresses, 10 years of work history, medical statements for all household members, well test results, fire inspection, vaccination records for pets, vehicle insurance documentation, utility bills, and an eight week pay history.

In addition, the following assessment material may be requested of a prospective caregiver(s), if deemed necessary, to complete the home study process:

- Additional medical information and reports;
- Psychological assessment and recommendations;
- Recommendations from any counselor or counseling services the applicants are involved with presently or were involved with in the past;
- Additional references from former or present employers, friends, neighbors, or anyone related and/or unrelated and associated with the prospective foster care giver(s);
- Documentation of records check from police/sheriff and Children Services Agencies outside of Richland County where the prospective foster care giver had previously resided.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

All potential foster or foster-to-adopt families and individuals are assessed using the same assessment techniques as defined in this policy.

FOSTER CAREGIVER ORIENTATION

PURPOSE:

Foster Parent orientation and training is required to prepare the prospective foster home and allow a better understanding of what a child in foster care may have been through and how to best integrate foster children into their family.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Pursuant to OAC rule 5101:2-5-13 (A) (8), the Agency requires that all prospective foster and adoptive families wishing to become licensed through Richland County Children Services attend Foster and Adoptive Parent Orientation Training.

PROCEDURES:

Foster and Adoptive Parent Orientation Training

Orientation training for prospective foster and adoptive parents will consist of at least thirty-six (36) hours of training mandated by the state, as well as training specific to Richland County. The training is usually held four times a year and is offered at no expense to the prospective foster and adoptive parents. Upon successful completion of the orientation training a certificate acknowledging this will be placed in the foster parent licensing record.

In situations where a family has received a foster child without completing all of the Agency and State requirements the family must still cooperate and comply with the requirements as outlined above. Failure to do so within the time allowed by the Agency could result in a failure to obtain certification, and/or removal of the child.

The Agency orientation program will consist of the following topic areas:

- The role of the foster parent as a member of the care and treatment team;
- Agency policies and procedures as it relates to foster parents;
- Liability insurance to foster parents is not offered by the Agency. Foster parents are encouraged to contact their insurance provider for an update to their current homeowner's insurance policy at their expense. Compensation for damages done by foster children is handled on a case-by-case basis;
- Legal representation to the foster caregiver for improper performance of their roles is not offered by the Agency. Foster parents are encouraged to seek representation at their own expense;
- The Agency is responsible to investigate all allegations of abuse and / or neglect involving a child living in a family foster home;
- The legal rights and responsibilities of foster parents;
- ODJFS requirements for certifying foster homes;
- Foster caregivers' involvement in permanency planning for children and their families;
- The effects of placement, separation, and attachment issues have on children, their families, and foster caregivers;

- The effects of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and substance abuse on normal human growth and development;
- Behavior management techniques;
- Effects of caregiving on children’s families;
- At least three hours of training on cultural issues in placement, including cultural diversity training;
- Prevention, recognition, and management of communicable diseases;
- Community health and social services available to children and their families; and
- Information needed when a child who has been adjudicated a delinquent child for commission of certain violent crimes is placed in a foster home.

For those families who will be providing care for older teens, training in how to prepare an adolescent for independent living is required.

First Aid and CPR is required for all caregivers licensed as foster parents.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Foster Caregiver Orientation is completed by the Foster Care worker at the completion of each Pre-service cohort.

FOSTER HOME RECERTIFICATION & ANNUAL REVIEW

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services, hereafter referred to as the Agency, is committed to quality administration and service to children placed foster care. In compliance with Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-5-24, the Agency will ensure safety of all foster care settings upon recertification of the home.

PROCEDURES:

Recertification

The following factors will be adhered to at the time of recertification of a foster home:

The Agency shall notify a foster caregiver not less than ninety or more than one hundred and fifty days prior to the date of expiration of the certification of their home. The notification shall be on a JFS 01331 form, “Notice of Expiration and Reapplication for a Foster Home Certificate.”

An Assessor must complete a home visit with the foster caregiver(s) within 30 days before the certificate expires.

Prior to recommending a home for recertification, the assessor will complete updated background checks for all adults in the household, including BCI, FBI, SACWIS, Lexis Nexis, and local law enforcement checks.

All paperwork must be submitted by the Assessor to the placement supervisor one week prior to expiration.

An Assessor shall complete a JFS 01385, "Assessment for Child Placement Update", to ensure that the foster caregiver(s) remain in compliance with the certification requirements.

An Assessor's reassessment of a foster home shall include at least one interview with each member of the household (except foster children) over the age of four years currently residing in the home.

The Agency shall conduct a safety audit of the foster caregiver's residence within six months prior to recommending a foster home for recertification and prior to or within ten working days after any relocation of a foster home and document that the residence has met all safety by completing a JFS 01348 "Safety Audit of a Foster Home" (rev.1/2003). Any deficiencies noted on the JFS 01348 shall result in the completion of a rule violation report and a corrective action plan in accordance with paragraph E of JFS 5101:2-5-28 of the Administrative Code. The Agency requires a foster caregiver to have the foster home inspected by a certified fire safety inspector prior to recommending the home for recertification. Fire Inspections are good for one year.

The Agency shall conduct a search for reports of child abuse and neglect contained in SACWIS for each foster caregiver and each adult residing with the foster caregiver.

The Agency shall prepare a summary report of involvement of a foster caregiver and other adult household members in reports of child abuse and neglect contained in SACWIS and place it in the caregiver's file, and in the record of each child placed in the caregiver's home. The summary report shall include, for each caregiver and each adult household member, a chronological list of abuse and neglect determination s of allegations in which the person was involved where a PCSA had done one of the following:

- Determined that abuse or neglect occurred;
- Initiated an investigation, and the investigation is ongoing;
- Initiated an investigation, and the Agency was unable to determine whether abuse or neglect occurred.

The summary report shall **not** contain any of the following:

- Any information concerning a report of abuse or neglect where the public children services agency determined that abuse or neglect did not occur or was unsubstantiated.
- The name of the person or entity who made or participated in the make of the report of abuse or neglect. This includes any additional collateral contact who made, or participated in, the report of abuse or neglect.
- Any information the release of which is prohibited by state or federal law
- The name of or other identifying information regarding a child.

If the search indicates there are no allegations or reports of involvement in child abuse or neglect investigations for any applicant or adult household member, the summary report shall indicate that there is no record involving any applicant or adult household member in an allegation or report of involvement in a child abuse or neglect investigation reported to SACWIS.

If the certified home is an approved adopt-only home, then one non-relative reference must be obtained.

The Agency shall, prior to the expiration date of a foster home certificate enter required data into the SACWIS system recommending:

- Recertification;
- Denial of recertification, or;
- Closure of the home

The Agency, if deemed necessary, may require a report of physical, psychiatric or psychological examination or treatment of the caregiver or any foster home resident by a licensed physician, psychologist, or other certified or licensed professional.

Annual Review

The following factors will be adhered to at the time of an annual review of a foster home:

An Assessor must complete a home visit with the foster caregiver(s) within 3 months of the foster home's annual review date.

An Assessor's reassessment of a foster home shall include at least one interview with each member of the household (except foster children) over the age of four years currently residing in the home.

Prior to the approval of annual review, the Assessor will complete updated background checks for all adults in the household, including SACWIS and law enforcement checks.

The Agency shall conduct a safety audit of the foster caregiver's residence within six months prior to the annual review date.

A fire inspection must be completed and approved by a State Fire Inspector or the Fire Inspector designated by the foster home's local fire department prior to the approval of the annual review date.

If the home is not provided a city water line, a well water test must be completed by the County's Health Department prior to the approval of an annual review. IF the Agency receives a well water test indicating that the water is unsafe, the Agency will create an alternative water plan ensuring a continuous supply of safe drinking water.

An Assessor will complete the Foster Home Annual Review inclusive of the aforementioned and retain this review in SACWIS.

Waivers:

The Agency will Under No Circumstances approve waivers for:

- Fire Inspections
- Well Tests
- Training (except for "Good Cause" approved)
- Non-Relative Reference for Foster/Adopt or Adopt Only homes

Expiration of a Foster Home Certificate:

If the foster caregiver fails to reapply or voluntarily terminate their certificate prior to the expiration of the current certificate the foster home certificate shall expire.

If the certificate expires due to a caregiver's failure to submit the JFS01331, "Notice of Expiration and Reapplication for a Foster Home Certificate", to the Agency, pursuant to Chapter 119 of the Ohio Revised Code, they have no rights to appeal.

Upon expiration of a foster home certificate the Agency will enter the appropriate data into SACWIS to recommend closure of the home.

FOSTER CAREGIVER ONGOING TRAINING

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services is committed to ensuring fully trained and educated foster parents available for matching with children who enter Agency care. Substitute care parents may attend any training sessions that appear helpful for their placement or the Agency may suggest sessions for them to attend. These training sessions are at no cost to the participant.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Pursuant to OAC rule 5101:2-5-13 (A)(9), and 5101:2-5-33, a foster caregiver certified to operate a family foster home must complete a minimum requirement of 40 hours of continuing training during each recertification period of two years. A caregiver certified to operate a treatment or specialized foster home must complete a minimum requirement of 60 hours of continuing training during each recertification period of two years. The continuing training shall be in accordance with the caregiver's written individual training needs assessment and continuing training plan

PROCEDURES:

A foster caregiver will complete a written needs assessment and develop a continuing training plan to address those needs. No pre-placement training can be counted towards the completion of continuing training. An adoption assessor will develop the training plan with the foster caregiver.

The following options are available to obtain training hours for certified foster parents:

- Ongoing Foster Care Training at Richland County Children Services or any regional training center of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program
- Professional Training Seminars (if applicable to your ITNA)
- Center Based Training
- Treatment Support Groups
- In-Home Training
- Secondary / College Classes (in an approved field of study)

Continuing training hours completed outside of a classroom (up to one-third of required training hours) must include a transfer of learning component, and must consist of one of the following informational sources:

- Video presentations with a transfer of learning component
- Books or magazines
- Computer programs
- Internet sites
- Interactive video presentations

Final approval of a foster caregiver to earn training hours in the above outlined manner is at the discretion of the Agency.

Transfer of learning components must have at least one of the following:

- A pretest;
- A post-test; or
- A discussion following the training.

A foster caregiver may complete up to twenty percent of their training hours by teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers or by providing mentoring services to other foster caregivers. To qualify for teaching or mentoring services the foster caregiver shall, at minimum:

- Have at least 2 years of experience as a foster caregiver;
- Have had at least 2 child placements in their home;
- Have a current Foster Care Certification;
- Not be under a corrective action plan by a recommending Agency;
- Not be under investigation for a violation of state statute or rule by a recommending Agency or ODJFS; and
- Must be approved by the Agency and documented on ITNA.

Mentoring services means, at a minimum:

- Assisting foster caregivers with information that will encourage communication between the new foster caregivers and human service agencies.
- Offering foster caregivers possible solutions to problems that may occur while caring for a child in placement.
- Assisting and guiding recently certified foster caregivers in day to day activities while caring for a child in placement.
- Offering to assist foster caregivers in utilizing resources within their community.
- Encouraging recently certified foster caregivers to attend training sessions to maintain their current certification.

Training can be completed through Ongoing Foster Care Training at RCCS, Professional Training Seminars, Centered-Based Training, Treatment Support Groups, and In-Home Training. Only 1/3 of the annual training hours can be in the form of videos, books and approved internet training.

Continuing training where a foster caregiver is teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers or providing mentoring services to other foster caregivers may be used in combination with training completed outside a classroom to meet no more than one-third of the foster caregiver's continuing training requirements.

The foster parent's failure to complete a minimum of 40/60 hours of training per recertification period will result in the revocation of their license. Failure to meet the biannual training requirements will result in the removal of the foster child(ren) and revocation of the license.

“Good Cause” Policy

Licensed foster caregivers with Richland County Children Services must complete 40 hours of ongoing training each recertification period. This period is determined by their foster caregiver certificate date. If the foster caregiver fails to complete the required 40 hours of ongoing training, the agency may agree to continue their license if a “good cause” is determined and if the foster caregiver agrees to a written corrective action plan.

“Good Cause” may be described as the following:

- **Serious illness** – a doctor's excuse and explanation must be provided to the agency and the illness must have extended over a six-month period. The doctor must confirm that the foster caregiver was unable to attend training sessions due to this illness.
- **Family illness** – the illness of a family member of the foster caregiver which would have made their attendance at training difficult. The foster caregivers must be able to confirm the illness of the family member and the diagnosis of their illness. The “good cause” is only relevant if the illness falls within the last three months of their licensed certificate period.
- **Military** – the foster caregiver has served in active duty outside Ohio with a branch of the armed forces of the United States for more than thirty days in the preceding two-year period. The foster caregiver has served in active duty as a member of the Ohio organized militia, as defined in section 5923.01 of the Revised Code, which includes the Ohio national guard, the Ohio naval militia and the Ohio military reserve, for more than thirty days in the preceding two-year period and that active duty relates to either an emergency in or outside of Ohio or to military duty in or outside of Ohio
- If a “good cause” has been established, the Agency staff and the foster caregiver will create an action plan. The corrective action plan will state that the foster caregiver must attend at least four (4) hours of training per month for the next three (3) months and must continue this schedule until all training hours are made up. A caregiver who has served in active military duty shall have an additional one month for each month the caregiver was on active duty. The Agency may waive any required training not completed at the end of a foster caregiver's certification. The required training for the next recertification period after an approved waiver shall be the same as for any other caregiver.

The Agency's foster staff will monitor the progress and cooperation of the foster caregiver regarding the corrective action plan. If the foster caregiver does not follow through with the corrective action plan, or if the foster caregiver refuses to sign the corrective action plan, their foster certification will be recommended for revocation.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Agency staff should work cooperatively with substitute caregivers to assure they have obtained their mandated training each year.

FOSTER CARE FINANCIAL

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A) (5), the Agency will annually define and /or revise foster payment board rates including any reimbursements for transportation and respite care.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Routine expenditures on behalf of a foster child are to be paid by foster parents from their monthly board payment.

PROCEDURES:

Each month foster caregivers will receive a boarding check to cover food, shelter, clothing, allowances and other needs of the foster child.

Board rates are reviewed yearly by the RCCSB Finance Committee. The rates are commensurate with the cost of maintaining the child and the special needs of the child and consideration for the standard of living in respect to recreational, social and educational activities.

Board reflects the number of days a foster child resides with their foster caregiver the preceding month. Check will generally arrive by mail on or before the 25th of each month following placement of the child.

In addition, each child in care is eligible to receive an initial clothing voucher up to \$250.

Expenses Covered by the Board Rate

Routine expenditures on behalf of a foster child are to be paid by foster parents from the monthly board payment. Usual expenses to be paid for by the board rate include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Room and board
- Food
- Ongoing clothing
- Haircuts
- School supplies
- Personal items such as shampoo, deodorant, etc.

- Non-prescription items
- Child's allowance (if desired)
- Diapers and formula

All licensed foster parents are expected to provide transportation for children placed in their home. Transportation for all business-related activities are reimbursed at a rate determined by the agency and approved by the Board.

Business-related activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Visitation
- Counseling
- Tutoring
- Doctor / Dentist Visit
- Clinic
- Shopping for the foster child's clothing needs
- Transportation to and from a school in a different district-with Agency Approval
- Foster parent training
- Travel to a babysitter while attending training
- Parent / teacher conferences
- Court
- Team Meetings

Foster parents will process mileage in the following manner:

- Mileage will be recorded on a mileage / expense sheet (one child per sheet)
- Turn in the mileage form to the child's case worker by the 1st day of the month in order to receive reimbursement.
- Mileage can only be claimed once per trip. (Example: if three children go to the same appointment, mileage can only be claimed on one child's expenses.)
- Turn in the mileage forms monthly even if it is just for a couple of miles.
- Payment will be added to the monthly board.
- Copies of the mileage sheet can be obtained from your case worker or you may make copies.

Reimbursement will not be made for transportation to school extracurricular activities such as sports or clubs unless that activity is part of the child's case plan.

Transportation to and from a foster child's place of employment will not be reimbursed; instead it is recommended that the foster child assume that responsibility by using the money earned at a rate determined by the foster parent and child. Exceptions will be made when employment is related to the child's case plan.

Respite

Payment for respite care for children can be arranged among foster parents at their own discretion or the foster parent asking for respite can request that the case worker arrange payment of respite. If this is requested, the Agency will deduct the daily rate from the foster parent requesting respite and reimburse the respite caregiver with it. NOTE: the respite plan must be communicated to the Placement Team prior to respite occurrence.

Work-Related Child Care

The Agency will assist with work related child care upon request if directed to do so. Foster parents must apply for day care through Department of Job and Family Services to see if they qualify for their program. If the foster family does not qualify for assistance, the Agency will assist with child care expenses at a determined child care provider. If the foster parents do not wish to use that provider, the foster parents will be responsible for the child care expense. Bills for child care must be itemized, and child care must be billed separately for each child. Where possible, foster parents shall arrange for the child care provider to invoice the Agency directly.

Invoices need to include the following information:

1. Name of provider
2. Unit of Measure
 - a. Part-time weekly
 - b. Full-time weekly
 - c. Hourly
3. Units
 - a. for Part-time weekly, itemize which days of the month the child attended
 - b. for Full-time weekly, itemize which days of the month the child attended
 - c. for Hourly, itemize which days of the month, and how many hours each day, the child attended
4. Rate
 - a. For Part-time weekly, include the cost per week
 - b. For Full-time weekly, include the cost per week
 - c. For Hourly, include the cost per hour.

Graduation Expenses

RCCS is very proud of all foster children who graduate from high school. The Agency will have \$300 available for independent living and graduation expenses such as, prom wardrobe, class ring, graduation announcements and senior pictures. Receipts will be required in order to receive the benefit. Once the \$300 is spent, no additional money will be made available.

Foster Child "On Leave"

When a child is "on leave" from a foster home, as defined below, the foster parents will continue to receive board payment for up to 7 consecutive days, per such event. Any other exceptions would need to be approved by Assistant Director or Executive Director. Events that constitute a child being "on leave" include, camp, pre-placement visits of no more than 3 days. In the cases of a

hospitalization, the foster parent will receive payments for 7 consecutive days IF the foster parent's attendance with the child (beyond normal visitation) is required. If a child is in Detention, the foster parent will receive payments for 7 consecutive days provided they can show proof of attendance at all required court hearings occurring in that timeframe. Children who are "AWOL" are not "on leave" and there will be no payments to the foster parents.

Foster parents are not paid when 7 consecutive days "on leave" expires or when the foster parent requests the leave due to vacation, illness, crisis or respite.

School Fees

Payment of school registration fees, lab fees, workbook fees and any other school fees, including summer school fees for foster children may be waived by the school upon presentation of the child's medical card. If this is the case, present the child's medical card to the school for fee waiver. If this is not the case for your child, foster parents are asked to direct the school to bill the fees directly to the Agency. If the school instructs the foster parent to pay the fees, they may attach the receipt to the foster parent mileage/expense sheet for reimbursement. The Agency will reimburse for field trip expenses and school pictures with a receipt. Fees shall be billed separately for each child.

Training Subsidy

The Agency shall compensate foster caregivers for the cost of attending training sessions at a rate of \$10 per training hour successfully completed. The subsidy shall not exceed compensation for more than 40 hours (60 hours for treatment foster homes) for the foster parent's certification period. Stipend payments shall be calculated in quarter hour increments, except that no compensation will be paid for training sessions that are less than one hour in duration. An approved trainer must be present at the training for the foster parent to receive training subsidy. The foster parent must provide a copy of the training certificate to the foster care department to receive payment.

The Agency shall defer compensation for pre-service training until the foster caregiver is certified. At that time, a lump sum stipend equivalent to \$10 per training hour multiplied by the minimum required training hours as listed in 5101:2-5-33 of the Administrative Code will be paid to the foster parent.

Foster parents may receive payment under this section for any RCCS approved training held at RCCS or another OCWIP training center. Foster parents will not receive the subsidy for training hours obtained through mentoring or teaching other foster caregivers, or hours obtained through videotapes, books, orientation or training obtained outside of RCCS. The foster parents' signature and attendance for the entire training class is mandatory in order to receive the subsidy. The training subsidy is dependent on state funding and may be discontinued if such funding is no longer available.

Well Tests

RCCS will reimburse foster parents' costs for well tests associated with the initial certification and recertification - this includes any re-testing that may need to be done. To receive reimbursement, attach the well test receipt to the foster parent mileage/expense sheet and submit to the Agency.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Each month foster caregivers will receive a boarding check to cover food, shelter, clothing, allowances and other needs of the foster child placed in their home. All licensed foster parents are expected to provide transportation for children placed in their home.

PURCHASE ORDERS – FOSTER PARENTS

PURPOSE:

To identify the steps needed for the initial clothing order purchase and any additional items that children in substitute care may need.

Initial Clothing Purchase Orders (at the time of placement)

When a child enters foster care, the child's caseworker attempts to obtain the child's clothing from the child's family of origin or last residence. In assessing the child's initial clothing needs, the Agency will take into account the child's wearable clothing along with seasonal and age-appropriate needs.

Once the child's initial clothing needs are assessed and determined, the Placement Supervisor or designee will approve up to \$250 for initial clothing voucher, based upon the child's clothing needs and expected length of custody. Additional clothing should be budgeted from the monthly boarding allowance.

When the foster child leaves the foster home, all purchased clothing issued by the Agency and able to be worn by the child, shall accompany the child. Clothing that is outgrown and still in good condition and style should be used for future foster children. When a foster child moves to another home, it is expected that all wearable clothing for that child go with the child.

Additional Items:

- Formula:** A purchase order may be requested for formula at the time of placement until WIC has been started which should be within 30 days of placement.
- Personal Items:** Personal items such as shampoo, powder, soap, diaper cream, etc., cannot be obtained by purchase orders but should be budgeted from the foster child's monthly board allowance.
- School Supplies:** School supplies are also items which should be budgeted from the monthly board allowance and cannot be obtained with a purchase order.
- Extracurricular Activity:** Special equipment for sports, music and any other extracurricular activity should be budgeted from the monthly board allowance. If this expense is not manageable but is needed for the child, contact your foster care worker.

Purchase Orders – How To Use Them

Once the purchase order is obtained from the Agency, the foster parent can use the purchase order at the specified store by the specified deadline.

The Agency recommends the foster parent take the following steps to ensure a smooth transaction:

- Upon entering the store, check with the store manager or customer services as to the store's policy for the use of the Agency purchase order
- Purchase only the items listed on the purchase order. If a particular item on the purchase order cannot be found, contact the Agency to obtain another purchase order for the missing item in another store.
- After you have purchased the items listed on the purchase order, please remember to attach the store receipt to the purchase order copy and return it to the assigned caseworker.

Questions concerning the use of the Agency purchase order can be directed to your foster care worker.

SHARING THE FAMILY FOSTER HOME

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services foster parents, with a shared home agreement, may care for a child in the custody of another county. This policy defines the parameters of notifying the custodial agency of specific incidents occurring with the child as defined below.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Pursuant to OAC rule 5101:2-5-13, the Agency maintains the sharing of family foster homes with other Agencies when in the best interests of the child being served and when procedure is followed. All sharing of RCCS Foster Homes requires written consent of the Executive Director.

PROCEDURES:

Prior to an agency sharing use of a family foster home which has been recommended for certification by another agency, the agency wishing to use the home must obtain a written agreement signed by the recommending agency stating how the home is to be used and that all parties affected by the agreement approve of it.

The recommending agency shall also provide written notification to any other agencies currently using the home.

The Agreement to share use of a family foster home shall specify the board rate, medical and dental arrangements, and all case management services to be provided by the foster family.

Once this information has been obtained, the Program Manager or designee shall provide a written summary and request for the approval of the Assistant Director or designee and the Executive Director before the home is shared.

The recommending agency will immediately notify the custodial agency when a licensed family foster home is providing care for a child in the custody of another agency if any of the following incidents occur:

- A serious injury or illness involving medical treatment of the foster child;
- The death of the foster child;
- Unauthorized absence of the foster child from the home;
- Removal or attempted removal of the foster child from the home by any person or agency other than the placing agency; or
- Any involvement of the foster child with law enforcement authorities.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Regular communication between the family, the foster care worker and the custodial agency are imperative to provide appropriate services to all parties.

TRANSFER OF THE FAMILY FOSTER HOME CERTIFICATION

POLICY STATEMENT:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-31, the Agency will transfer the certification (license) of a family foster home to another agency as it applies to procedure.

PROCEDURES:

RCCS may transfer a currently certified family foster home to a PCSA, or a PCPA or PNA which is certified by ODJFS to recommend family foster homes for certification, and which has agreed to accept the transfer. A foster caregiver certified to operate a specialized foster home may transfer to an agency that does not operate a specialized foster home program if the caregiver agrees that upon execution of the transfer, the foster home designation will be identified as a family foster home.

Prior to recommending the transfer of the family foster home from one agency to another, the Agency initiating the transfer shall obtain a written agreement signed by both agencies and the foster caregiver indicating that all parties agree to the transfer. The recommending agency shall also provide written notification to any other agencies currently using the home.

RCCS shall accept a transfer of a foster home from another agency only if the foster caregiver has been certified with the sending agency for a minimum of one year. An exception shall be made in the case of a foster caregiver who has relocated to another county not served by the foster caregiver's recommending agency or if the foster caregiver's recommending agency ceases to recommend foster homes for certification to ODJFS. If a foster caregiver has relocated to another county not served by the foster caregiver's recommending agency or if both the sending and receiving agency agree to the transfer.

Upon receipt of a written request from a foster caregiver who meets the requirements of this rule and who expresses a desire to transfer from the caregiver's current recommending agency, a receiving agency shall consider the request and make a decision whether it wishes to proceed further

with an assessment to determine whether to accept the transfer. A foster caregiver shall not initiate more than one transfer request during a certification period and only to one agency at a time.

If RCCS determines that it wishes to further explore the possibility of a transfer of a foster home to its supervision, before accepting the transfer of the foster home, the Agency shall contact the sending agency of the foster caregiver in writing to notify the sending agency that such a request has been received and to request a complete copy of the caregiver's foster home records except for any personal references and criminal records checks.

Upon receipt of the request from the Agency, if the foster caregiver's recommending agency has previously made a decision not to place any more children in the foster caregiver's home, it shall inform the Agency of this decision and the reasons why the decision was made. If the Agency still wishes to proceed with exploring the transfer request, it shall notify the sending agency in writing. Prior to sending the records to the Agency, the sending agency shall ensure that a signed release of information authorization from the foster caregiver authorizing the sending agency to provide a copy of the agency's foster care records to the Agency has been obtained. The release of information may be obtained by either agency or the foster caregiver. While the transfer request is pending, the sending agency shall continue to work with the foster caregiver as it does with all other foster caregivers associated with the agency and shall continue to provide the caregiver with notification of training events needed according to the foster caregiver's written needs assessment and continuing training plan. The sending agency shall allow the foster caregiver to attend any such events and shall continue to meet with the caregiver regarding the care of any child placed in the home. No child shall be removed from a foster caregiver's home solely because the caregiver has requested a transfer from one agency to another.

Within fifteen working days of receipt of the signed release of information and any applicable copying fee, the sending agency shall send a complete copy of the foster home records except for any references and any criminal records background checks conducted to the Agency. The records shall include the most recent home study, home study updates, training records, fire inspection reports, safety audits and medical reports. The records shall also contain copies of all complaint or rule noncompliance investigations and any applicable corrective action plans. If there are any outstanding complaint or rule noncompliance investigations or corrective action plans that have not been fully implemented, the sending agency shall notify the receiving agency of the nature of any outstanding complaint or rule noncompliance investigations and any corrective action plans that have not been fully implemented. The sending agency may charge the Agency a reasonable fee for copying the records, not to exceed twenty-five cents per page. No additional fee shall be charged to any party. If a fee is charged for copying the records, the records shall not be sent until the fee is paid. The records shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested or hand delivered by Agency staff. If the records are hand delivered, the sending agency shall be provided with a receipt showing the date the records were delivered to the Agency and the Agency shall document the date it received the records.

The Agency shall accept the copy of the foster caregiver's records only from the sending agency. A copy of the records shall not be accepted from a foster caregiver. A caregiver may provide other information to the receiving agency that the caregiver considers to be pertinent.

Upon receipt of the foster caregiver's records, the Agency shall assign an assessor to review the information received and conduct an assessment of the transfer request.

To allow the Agency an opportunity to make an informed decision as to whether it wishes to proceed with the transfer request, the assessor shall review the foster caregiver's foster home records and any other information received from the sending agency and the foster caregiver(s). The assessor shall complete the review and make a recommendation regarding the transfer within sixty days after the records have been received. If the transfer review cannot be completed within sixty days, the assessor shall document in the foster home records the reasons why the review cannot be completed within sixty days. In addition to reviewing the sending agency's records and any information provided by the foster caregiver(s), in conducting the transfer review, the assessor shall contact staff from the sending agency and the foster caregiver(s) to ascertain the reasons why the request is being made and to determine if there are foster children in the home and, if so, to identify the agency with custody of the child(ren). The assessor shall also make at least one visit to the foster home and conduct a face-to-face meeting with each foster caregiver and with all other household members. If the foster caregiver's records indicate that there are any outstanding complaint or rule noncompliance investigations or corrective action plans that have not been fully implemented, the assessor shall not recommend acceptance of the transfer unless the assessor is satisfied that any outstanding complaints or rule noncompliance investigations are not material to the request to transfer the home and the safety of any children who are or may be placed in the home. All transfer review activities shall be documented in the receiving agency's foster home records.

The Agency shall not approve the transfer request until the following information has been received and approved by the Agency:

- Three new personal references for the foster caregiver(s) from three persons who are unrelated to the caregiver and who do not live with the caregiver. This includes any adult child living in with the foster caregiver(s) providing care and supervision;
- A new criminal records check has been obtained, reviewed and approved by the assessor for all persons subject to a criminal records check residing in the foster home including BCI/FBI and local CAN registry;
- A new safety audit of the foster home has been conducted to verify that the home meets all current safety requirements for foster homes including fire inspection and/or well inspection; and
- Documentation of the assessor's decision to recommend approval of the transfer request, and the reasons for the decision are recorded in the receiving agency's foster home records. The foster caregiver and the sending agency shall be sent a written notice of the receiving agency's decision within five working days of the decision.

If the Agency approves the transfer request, all information contained in the copy of the caregiver's records sent by the original recommending agency as well as any information gathered in the transfer review process and the assessor's written recommendation shall be incorporated as part of the Agency's foster caregiver records.

If the Agency does not approve the transfer request, the copy of the records received from the sending agency and the assessor's written recommendation to reject the transfer request shall be maintained by the agency for at least two years.

The approval or rejection of a transfer request rests solely with the Agency subject to the approval of ODJFS and creates no right of appeal pursuant to Chapter 119 of the Revised Code for any party to the transfer request.

Prior to accepting a transfer, the Agency shall ensure that the custodial agency of any child currently placed in the home agrees to the transfer. If the custodial agency does not agree to the transfer while a child in its custody is placed in the home, the transfer shall not take place until the child is no longer placed in the home. A child shall not be removed from a caregiver's home solely because the caregiver seeks to transfer his/her foster home certificate to another agency.

Nothing in this rule shall be construed to require the Agency to accept the transfer of a foster home from another agency.

Prior to or not later than thirty calendar days after a transfer request has been processed by ODJFS, the Agency shall provide an orientation to the foster caregiver of the agency's policies and procedures for foster caregivers.

The transfer of a foster home to a receiving agency has the effect of conferring upon the receiving agency all the duties of a recommending agency contained in Chapter 5101:2-5 of the Administrative Code.

When the receiving agency has decided to accept the transfer, it shall make a recommendation to ODJFS to transfer the foster home to the agency by submitting a JFS 01334 "Notification of Transfer of a Foster Home" (rev. 6/2009).

To allow for the orderly processing of transfer requests and recertification of a foster home, if a transfer of a foster home is pending within the ninety days immediately prior to the expiration of the certificate, the sending agency and the receiving agency may determine which agency will conduct the recertification review. If there is no agreement between the two agencies, the foster home's recommending agency shall be responsible for conducting the recertification review and recommendation.

When the receiving agency has decided to accept the transfer of a foster home it shall enter the necessary data into SACWIS to register the foster home as a resource.

Following receipt of a JFS 01334 by the foster care licensing section, ODJFS will issue a foster home certificate with the receiving agency identification number indicated as the recommending agency and enter information into SACWIS to indicate that the sending agency's records for the caregiver have been closed. The certificate shall be effective from the date of the transfer until the end of the current certification period unless at the time of the transfer the foster home is changing from a pre-adoptive infant foster home to a family foster home or specialized foster home or from a family foster home to a specialized foster home. In such cases, due to the increased training requirements, a new two-year certification period will begin upon the date of transfer.

Upon receipt of a signed release of information form, the Agency shall release a copy of a foster care home study to an adoption agency when the foster caregiver is being considered as an adoptive parent for a set fee.

OPERATION OF TREATMENT OR MEDICALLY FRAGILE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

To ensure that RCCS complies with all requirements under the OAC and ORC regarding the provision of Medically Fragile Foster Homes.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Richland County Children Services shall have a written policy on the operation of the specialized foster home program which shall comply with the requirements of rules 5101:2-5-36, 5101:2-5-37, 5101:2-7-16, and 5101:2-7-17 of the administrative code. This policy specifies the number of foster children, including specification of the number of treatment and medically fragile foster children, for whom each treatment team leader shall be responsible for providing case management services. The policy also specifies the number of treatment team leaders for which each treatment team leader supervisor is responsible for supervision. The policy also specifies how the agency will determine the equivalent experience required by paragraph (A) of rule 5101:2-7-16 of the administrative code and/or rule 5101:2-7-17 of the administrative code, as applicable.

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A) (10, 11, 12, 13 and 14), the Agency will provide services that are in compliance with requirements for the operation of Treatment Foster Homes and Medically Fragile Foster Homes.

PROCEDURES:

An agency operating a specialized foster home program shall have a written policy that provides for access to both planned and crisis respite care, the amount to be determined on a case-by-case basis, for children in the program's care. The respite care policy shall include, but is not limited to, the following provisions:

- Utilization of respite care shall be only with the approval of the administrative director of the specialized foster care program or his or her designee.
- A process for the specialized foster care program to select and approve respite care providers.
- Only approved respite care providers shall be utilized.
- A respite care provider shall not provide respite care for children for more than two consecutive weeks unless the provider is certified as a specialized foster caregiver.

In addition, for a medically fragile child, any nursing treatment plan containing physician orders shall be provided. The information required by this paragraph shall be provided to the respite care provider by the agency that has approved the respite care provider. Documentation that this has

been done shall be maintained in the child's case record by the agency that approved the respite care provider.

For each occasion of respite care, a respite care provider shall provide a written report of the child's stay in respite care to the specialized foster caregiver.

A respite care provider for a medically fragile child shall be certified as a foster caregiver for medically fragile children or be a licensed medical professional.

An agency operating a specialized foster home program shall have a written policy, outlining procedures for matching children with specialized foster caregivers, that ensures consideration of the child's needs, the capabilities of the specialized foster caregiver, and family-centered, neighborhood-based practices.

An agency operating a specialized foster care program shall have a written policy to assure that all children in specialized foster care and all specialized foster caregivers and their families affiliated with the program shall have access to crisis counseling arranged by the program for issues or problems caused by a specific incident related to a child receiving treatment within the caregiver's home including the death or hospitalization of a child.

Each treatment team leader will be responsible for providing case management for up to 12 treatment or medically fragile foster children. The treatment team leader supervisor is responsible for supervision of up to three treatment team leaders.

A treatment foster caregiver shall meet at least one of the following requirements:

- A minimum of 365 days of caring for a foster child in placement as a certified foster caregiver.
- A minimum of 60 hours of training in a classroom setting that complies with the following:
 - Training shall be completed within 24 months prior to the date of application for initial certification as a specialized foster caregiver.
 - For a certified caregiver, the training shall be completed within 24 months of the certified caregiver's written intent to upgrade their certification if the caregiver does not meet the requirements of having a minimum of 365 days of caring for a foster child in placement as a certified caregiver.
 - The training shall relate to children with special or exceptional needs as defined in rule 5101:2-47-18 of the OAC.
- A minimum of five (5) years cumulative experience providing daily care for a child in the home of the foster caregiver or applicant.
- A minimum of 1 year of cumulative experience caring for a child who has special or exceptional needs as defined by rule 5101:2-47-18 of the OAC.

A treatment foster caregiver, or at least one member of a treatment foster caregiver couple or co-parent, shall have weekly consultation and face-to-face contact at least every two weeks with the recommending agency's professional treatment staff. At least one of the face-to-face contacts each month shall be in the treatment foster home.

A treatment foster caregiver shall prepare, and keep current, a written record of the behavior and progress of the child towards achieving the treatment goals as identified in the service plan of each foster child placed in the home as required by the agency.

Under the direction of the treatment team leader, a treatment foster caregiver shall assume primary responsibility for implementing the in-home treatment strategies specified in the child's service plan and any revisions thereto.

A treatment foster caregiver shall work cooperatively with the family of the child as set forth in the child's service plan and case plan.

A treatment foster caregiver shall perform any additional written responsibilities and duties established by the recommending agency for a treatment foster caregiver.

A treatment foster caregiver shall attend and participate in the treatment team meetings for each child placed in his home. If the treatment foster home certificate is in the name of a couple or co-parents, only one caregiver is required to attend the treatment team meetings unless otherwise specified by the recommending agency.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Experience indicates that when caregivers use treatment skills and consistent implementation of a motivation system, behaviorally challenged or medically fragile children can make significant gains.

FOSTER PARENT NOTIFICATION OF COURT HEARING

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services is committed to assuring foster parents are an integral part of the child protection team and they are consistently and appropriately notified of all court hearings involving children in their care.

PROCEDURES:

For any court involved case where the child is in Agency custody and in foster care, the foster parents shall be notified of all scheduled court hearings regarding children in their care.

All Court Notices that come into the Agency are distributed and a copy is provided to the caseworker assigned to the case.

When the caseworker receives a Court Hearing Notice regarding a child in foster care, the caseworker shall make a copy of the Court Notice, complete the cover letter and send both to the foster parents within 3 days of receiving the Court Notice. The legal department is provided a copy of the notification letter for the legal file and to provide to the court as documentation. The caseworker will scan a copy into the system.

If the court hearing is expedited and mailing is not practical or possible for timely notification; the caseworker shall immediately contact the foster parents via phone, text message or email and advise them of the date, time and location of the court hearing.

The caseworker shall provide the foster parent with their copy of the Notice when they arrive at Court or, if they are unable to appear, the Notice may then be placed in the mail with the required cover letter.

DISCIPLINE POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13(A) (1) and OAC 5101:2-7-9 (A-K) the Agency will comply with rules and regulations that govern discipline of children who are placed in a substitute care setting.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Richland County Children Services prohibits any type of restraint to be used with children in a substitute care setting.

PROCEDURES:

The following will be observed when disciplining children in substitute caregiver homes:

- A substitute care giver will treat each child with kindness, consistency and respect;
- A substitute care giver will not discriminate in providing care and supervision to children because of race, sex, religion, or color or national origin;
- A substitute care giver will provide humane, instructive discipline appropriate to the age and functioning level of a child;
- Disciplinary methods will stress praise and encouragement for desired behavior rather than punishment;
- All rules and expectations made by a substitute care giver will be explained to a child in a manner appropriate to his or her age and understanding during his or her initial orientation and prior to any disciplinary action for violations of such rules;
- A child will not be punished for actions over which he or she has no control;
- A child will not be punished for bed-wetting or in the course of toilet-training activities;
- A substitute care giver will not subject a child to verbal abuse or swearing; derogatory remarks about the children, their families, their races, their sex, their religion, their color or national origin; or threats of physical violence or removal from the substitute care home.

A substitute care giver will not use any of the following punishments for a child:

- Physical hitting or any type of physical punishment inflicted in any manner upon the body such as spanking, paddling, punching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, pinching or rough handling;
- Physically strenuous work or exercises, when used as a means of punishment;
- Requiring or forcing a child to take an uncomfortable position, such as squatting or bending, or requiring a child to repeat physical movements when used as a means of punishment;

- Denial of social or recreational activities for excessive or prolonged periods of time, as defined by the agency. Denial and duration of such activities will be determined individually by case worker and substitute caregiver;
- Denial of social or casework services, medical treatment or educational services;
- Deprivation of meals;
- Denial of visitation or communication rights with the family of the foster child as a means of punishment;
- Denial of sleep;
- Denial of shelter, clothing, bedding or restroom facilities;
- The use of any type of restraints including, but not limited to Manual, Physical, Chemical, Medical, or Mechanical restraint of a child is **strictly prohibited and is not to be used under any circumstances.**

Any act of omission or commission by a substitute care giver or other member of the household which results in the death, injury, illness, abuse, or exploitation of a foster child will be grounds for the denial or revocation of a family foster home certificate. This may be a recommendation of the agency supervising a family foster home or Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. Substitute care providers who do not abide by the agency policy governing discipline will be subject to rules violation and possible agency investigation;

A substitute caregiver shall ensure that each child placed in their home who is not capable of meeting his own personal hygiene needs is clean and groomed daily. Clothing and footwear shall be clean, well-fitting, seasonal and appropriate to the child's age and sex. Children capable of meeting their own personal hygiene needs shall be provided with adequate personal toiletry supplies appropriate to the child's age, sex, race and cultural background. A substitute caregiver shall provide each child with instruction on good habits of personal care, hygiene, and grooming appropriate to the child's age, sex, race, cultural background and need for training.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Workers will work with substitute caregivers to develop discipline techniques specific to each child.

DEFINITIONS:

Mechanical restraint - any device used to prevent or restrict movement as punishment or for staff convenience. Mechanical restraint is prohibited by RCCS.

Chemical restraint - any substance given to a child to subdue or restrict movement or behavior as punishment or for staff convenience. Chemical restraint is prohibited by RCCS.

Physical restraint - a therapeutic holding technique(s) with the intent to minimize or prevent harm when the child has lost control of his or her actions in such a way as to threaten harm to self or others. Physical restraint shall not be used as a planned intervention until after other less restrictive procedures or measures have been explored and found to be inappropriate. At no time shall physical restraint be used as punishment or for staff convenience. Physical restraint in foster homes is prohibited by RCCS.

CHILD’S RIGHTS

PURPOSE:

To establish and communicate the rights of children in agency substitute care.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Richland County Children Services will assure that children in agency care are aware of their basic rights and that these rights are both supported and honored by RCCS Staff and substitute caregivers.

PROCEDURES:

The Agency, substitute caregiver(s), residential facility and any employee of the Agency or residential facility will assure and not violate any of the following rights of children:

- The right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or to abstain from the practice of religion;
- The right to be protected against discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, military status, national origin, disability, age or ancestry;
- The right to reasonable enjoyment of privacy;
- The right to have his or her opinions heard and be included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting his or her life;
- The right to receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support and supervision;
- The right to be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment;
- The right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation;
- The right to receive adequate and appropriate medical care;
- The right to receive adequate and appropriate food, clothing and housing;
- The right to his/her own money and personal property in accordance with the child’s service or case plan;
- The right to live in clean, safe surroundings;
- The right to participate in an appropriate educational program;
- The right to communicate with family, friends and “significant others” from whom he/she is living apart, in accordance with the child’s service or case plan; and
- The right to be taught to fulfill appropriate responsibilities to himself and to others.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

The most effective way to ensure that children in the Agency’s care understand their rights is to discuss these rights with them on a regular basis. Staff members should ensure that whenever a child is placed initially or moved, the staff member reviews the rights with the child in a way they can understand, based on child’s age and ability level.

CHILD AND FAMILY CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services is committed to assuring confidentiality is practiced and maintained for all families working with the Agency, currently or in the past.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Pursuant to OAC rule 5101:2-5-13 (A)(19), the Agency will take all reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of information concerning the child and child's family.

PROCEDURES:

In accordance with OAC 511:2-7-4, "a foster caregiver will not disclose or knowingly allow the disclosure of any information regarding a foster child or the foster child's family to persons not directly involved in the foster child's care and treatment on an official basis".

The Agency shares confidential information with foster parents whenever such sharing is in the best interests of the child. It is expected and required that foster parents keep private and confidential any information regarding the child prior to placement as well as throughout the duration of the placement.

The includes but is not limited to information about the child's background, birth parents, legal custodians, other caregivers and child's adjustment problems. Confidentiality is needed by the foster parents in order to protect the child's right to privacy.

Confidentiality also means foster parents will not share the above information with other foster parents and/or member of the community. Foster parents may feel free to discuss their foster child's situation with the child's caseworker, caseworker's supervisor, or other members of the child's treatment team.

The Agency will disseminate information to a Child Fatality Review Board as follows: The Child Fatality Review Board will identify the information and case documentation which they are requesting to be released. The Agency attorney will be consulted regarding the documents requested for release. The Executive Director will give the final approval for the release of the requested documents.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Richland County Children Services staff protects the confidentiality of information about clients and assumes a protective role regarding the disclosure of confidential information.

HUMAN RESEARCH PROJECTS, FUND RAISING, AND PUBLICITY ACTIVITIES

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13(A)(20), Richland County Children Services, hereafter referred to as the Agency, will have a policy in place governing participation in human research projects, fund raising, and publicity activities.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Human subject research occurs only within the provision of the law and pursuant to OAC and ORC rule and with prior written consent of the Executive Director.

PROCEDURES:

Richland County Children Services permits research involving all persons served in accordance with all state and federal laws. The identity and privacy of participants is safeguarded in all phases of research conducted by, or with the cooperation of, the Agency.

Richland County Children Services does not involve persons and children served by the Agency in fund raising activities or human research projects without the prior informed, written consents of the individual, parent, guardian or legal custodian, and the child according to their age and functioning level.

ALLEGATION OF MALTREATMENT OF A FOSTER CHILD IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

POLICY STATEMENT:

Richland County Children Services, hereafter referred to as the Agency, is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children placed in Agency foster homes. Substitute care providers are expected to adhere to the Agency's Discipline Policy for children in care.

When there is an incident of suspected maltreatment of a child or children in substitute care, the Agency is committed to ensuring the child/children's safety, and to investigating the concern in a professional and timely manner that will serve to meet the best interest of the child/children in question.

PROCEDURES:

Third-Party Investigations

All reports of suspected maltreatment of a child in a substitute care placement are to be reported to the Agency's screening department immediately. The screening procedure will determine if the allegation of maltreatment meets the criteria for an investigation.

An investigation of suspected maltreatment in the Agency's foster home shall be conducted by third-party investigation, which means that law enforcement or another Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) will serve as the investigator.

The intake team supervisor will inform the placement supervisor and the Program Manager immediately when a third-party investigation is being conducted on a substitute care placement. At the discretion of the Agency, the placement supervisor may arrange for the child/children in custody to be removed from the placement for the duration of the investigation.

Only under special circumstances, with the approval of the Assistant Director or Executive Director, may a child in the Agency's custody remain in a substitute care placement during a third-party investigation of suspected maltreatment of a foster child.

If allegations of maltreatment of a child in an Agency foster care placement are determined to be substantiated, then the Agency will recommend to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to revoke the foster home license. The Agency will not place children in the foster home indefinitely.

Rule Violation Investigations

If the reports of suspected maltreatment do not meet the criteria for a third-party investigation, then the report will be forwarded to the Program Manager (in cases of licensed foster parents) to determine if the report meets the criteria for a rule violation investigation.

The foster care supervisor and the Program Manager will meet to determine the safety of the foster child/children in the foster home. The decision whether to allow the children to remain in the home during the rule violation investigation will be based on the child's safety and best interest.

Rule violation investigations will be initiated by the foster care worker within 3 days of the Agency's receipt of the allegation. Rule violation investigations will be completed within 30 days.

The foster care worker will document any contacts that occur during the investigation in SACWIS activity notes. The summary and outcome of rule violation findings will be documented on the rule violation form.

The foster care worker and foster care supervisor will meet to discuss the findings of the rule violation investigation and determine whether the allegation is founded. If the allegation is determined to be founded the foster care worker and foster care supervisor in consultation with the Program Manager will develop a corrective action plan, or CAP, for the substitute care provider to correct the concern(s) within a designated time frame.

Notification of Grievance Procedure

When allegations of maltreatment of children in care are made against substitute care providers, the providers will be provided a Client's Right's Packet and a copy of the Agency's Grievance Procedure at the time the investigation is initiated.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN TREATMENT FOSTER CARE

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to OAC rule 5101:2-5-13(A)(14), it is the policy of Richland County Children Services that the philosophy and practice exists within the Agency's substitute care placements and facility that promoting respect, healing, and positive behavior prevents the need for restrictive behavior management interventions.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Richland County Children Services shall have a behavior management plan for children placed into Agency Operated Treatment Foster Homes within the time frame required by the Ohio Administrative Code.

PROCEDURES:

The caseworker will schedule a team meeting within 14 days of the child's placement into a treatment foster home or substitute care facility to develop a behavioral management plan for that child. The behavioral management plan will be developed with input from the substitute care providers and will include a detailed description of the full range of behavioral interventions that are least intrusive and least disruptive to the child. A behavior management plan will be developed and implemented with provisions consistent to the needs of children with disabilities and the specific child.

Richland County Children Services strictly prohibits the use of restrictive behavior management interventions such as physical and chemical restraints by agency staff and substitute care providers. In addition, the Agency prohibits excessive or inappropriate use of restrictive behavior management interventions as a form of discipline or compliance, or for the convenience of staff or substitute care providers. Restrictive behavioral management interventions shall not be used in response to property damage, or other situations that do not involve imminent danger to self or others.

Substitute caregivers, the assigned caseworker, and other named Agency staff will be responsible for the implementation of the behavioral management plan. The behavioral management plan will be reviewed on a bi-weekly basis and monitored by the Placement Supervisor.

The behavioral management plan will include non-violent crisis intervention techniques. The following chart defines the least intrusive, least disruptive responses to various levels of crisis development:

Crisis Development	Staff/Substitute Caregiver Interventions

Anxiety Level - A noticeable increase or change in behavior.	Supportive response - Be empathic and actively listen to what is bothering the individual.
Defensive Level - Individual refuses to accept support	Directive response - Approach which entails setting behavioral limits for the individual.
Verbal Escalation Continuum	
Questioning -1. Information seeking or 2. Challenging.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a rational response. 2. Ignore challenge-redirect, restate request.
Refusal - Acting out emotionally, refusal to comply	Limit setting - Offer choices and consequences: 1. Clear and simple; 2. Reasonable; 3. Enforceable i.e., timeout may be a choice, inform the individual of the positive consequences resulting from their compliance. Let them make the choice.
Release - Venting.	Allow to vent, isolate the situation away from the group, give directives and try verbally to get client to comply. Continue to use limit setting.
Intimidation - Verbal threats.	Keep non-violent, keep separated, continue to give directives and limit setting.
Acting Out Person - Loss of all rational thought and is a physical danger to self or others.	When child is in imminent danger call 911 first. When child is not in imminent danger, first contact RCCS, and then contact Help Line.
Tension Reduction - Decrease in physical and emotional energy.	Therapeutic Rapport - attempt to reestablish communication with an individual who is in the tension reduction stage.

The treatment team will closely monitor the behavior plan to ensure that certain chores and activities are identified when there is a contraindication based on the individual needs of the child. Alternative approaches will be developed and clearly described in the plan based on the individual needs of the child. Work chores will also be used as a behavioral intervention. All children will be instructed on the house rules in a manner that they can understand. The house rules will encourage good behavior by setting attainable goals and rewards for achieving the goals. Substitute caregivers will be consistent in their limit setting and in their reward giving.

All behavioral intervention plans for children with disabilities will be developed with their treating physician and/or nurse, psychologist, case worker, therapist, and other professionals with whom the child is working. The caseworker will set up a facilitated family team meeting with the treating professionals, parents, substitute caregivers, and any others involved in the family team. The family team meeting will outline all behaviors that need addressed in the behavior plan, strategies for dealing with those behaviors, any contraindications based on the individual needs of the child and a plan for positive reinforcement. These plans will identify any special accommodations needed and a plan for meeting those accommodations. The Agency will ensure that the substitute caregivers have all of the necessary resources necessary to meet the needs of children with disabilities so that the environment of the child is structured so as to maximize the opportunities for practicing particular skills.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

The following list of limit setting behaviors is permissible to utilize in the development of the behavior management plan:

- **Time Outs:** Removing the child from the situation for a short period of time (2-15 minutes) for the child to cool down and reflect on the situation.
- **Loss of Privileges:** The child loses privileges (i.e. phone, T.V., video games) for a period of time.
- **Grounded:** The child is not permitted to leave the foster home other than to go to school, for an established period of time.
- **Restriction:** Privileges are restricted for an established period of time (i.e. child may only watch 30 minutes of T.V. after school before he/she completes their homework.).
- **Developmentally Delayed:** We will give a longer time period to comply so that the child can comprehend staff intervention. Staff will speak at a level of understanding for each individual client.

CRISIS RESPONSE SUPPORT LINE FOR CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

PURPOSE:

To provide a process to decrease substitute care disruptions, maintain foster homes and increase substitute caregiver satisfaction through increased support.

PROCEDURES:

- A. Substitute care provider(s) will contact Family Life Counseling Support Line at 419-295-9285 for any emergent support needed to maintain child(ren), crisis stabilization and/or support needed;
- B. Family Life Counseling designee will respond to the request via phone and or in person as deemed necessary by the situation;
- C. Family Life Counseling designee will contact the After Hours Helpline to report foster parent(s) name, child name and basic request information.;
- D. This information will be noted on the After Hours Log for regular daily distribution to program staff;
- E. Substitute care provider(s) will contact their case worker and or supervisor of the case the following business to notify as well and or provide the notification via a phone message;
- F. Case worker or designee will contact the substitute care provider(s) for follow up and address any other needs for the child(ren) and or substitute care placement. Case worker or designee will collect information from the responding Family Life Counseling staff as needed and report the incident to the child(ren)'s counseling provider as needed. The case worker or designee will complete an Incident Report as needed as well for notification purposes.

MATCHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIALIZED FOSTER CAREGIVERS

PURPOSE:

Making appropriate matches will assure that children have been placed in the substitute care setting that will meet their basic and specialized needs while capitalizing on the specialized caregiver's skills and capabilities.

POLICY STATEMENT:

In compliance with OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A)(12) the Agency shall have a written policy outlining procedures for matching children with specialized foster caregivers that ensures consideration of the child's needs, the capabilities of the specialized foster caregiver, and family-centered neighborhood-based practices.

PROCEDURES:

Children in need of specialized foster care will be matched with specialized foster care givers who can meet their special needs. The child's caseworker will request a review with their supervisor to discuss the child's needs. If determined that an assessment needs to be completed the worker will complete the assessment questions and submit to the Program Manager for scoring. A second set of scoring will be completed by the Placement Supervisor. The caseworker will attach any diagnostic assessments, sex offender assessments, psychiatric records, drug and alcohol assessments, and Individual Educational Plans to the assessment. The child's special needs will be evaluated based on the criteria established by OAC 5101:2-47-18. The caseworker will also identify the neighborhood from which the child was removed, the child's current school system, and the permanency plan for the child.

Children who meet the criteria for special or exceptional needs will be matched with appropriately trained and licensed treatment foster care givers. Children who meet the criteria for intensive needs will be matched with appropriately trained and licensed treatment or medically fragile foster caregivers.

All current treatment and medically fragile foster care givers will be considered based on the current census in their home, level of training and expertise, location of their home in relationship to the home from which the child is being removed from and/or to which the child may return, and their availability as a foster to adopt placement, if applicable.

The treatment foster caregiver will be notified about the possible placement in order to set up a pre-placement visit. If the pre-placement visit is successful, the child will be placed with the treatment or medically fragile foster caregiver.

The treatment or medically fragile home will have no more than five children in the home. No more than two of which may be under the age of two or be foster children with therapeutic needs.

A treatment or medically fragile foster caregiver who is also an appropriately trained and licensed professional (reference rule update 5101:2-7-17) or who has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a child development or social services field and five years of child care experience and training related to serving children in foster care may provide care for not more than five children with special or exceptional needs.

Any exceptions to the number of children with exceptional needs to be served, including the need to place a sibling group, or the abilities of a specific family in relation to the special or exceptional needs of a specific child, shall be documented in the child's case record and in the treatment or medically fragile foster home record. If more than two children with exceptional needs are placed in a treatment or medically fragile foster home, all agencies holding custody of any other children placed in the home shall be notified by the treatment foster care program within seventy-two hours of placement.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Matching will occur in the home that meets the child's basic and specialized needs along with the skills and training required to meet those needs.

NOTIFICATION OF CONVICTION OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE HOUSEHOLD

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Agency requires that all foster caregivers or prospective foster caregiver notify the Agency in writing if a person residing in the home who is at least 12 years old, but under 18 years old, has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any offenses listed in Appendix A of this policy or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult would constitute one of those offenses.

PROCEDURES:

A foster caregiver or prospective foster caregiver shall notify the Agency in writing if a person residing with the foster caregiver or prospective foster caregiver has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any offenses listed in 5101:2-7-14, Appendix A, or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult constitute one of those offenses.

Should the Agency subsequently learn that a foster caregiver has failed to notify the Agency of the above outlined offense(s), the Agency shall notify ODJFS of its intent to initiate action to revoke the foster caregiver's certificate.

If a person residing with the foster caregiver or prospective foster caregiver is convicted of a felony that is not a qualifying offense, or is adjudicated delinquent for an act that if committed by an adult would constitute a felony but not a qualifying offense, the Agency will complete a re-assessment of the home and may solicit information and/or recommendations from any person, including, but not limited to, probation officers, counselors, or any other professionals working with the child. The Agency may require further information. The Agency will determine if any further placements will occur.

RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION BY CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

POLICY:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-16 (A) (B)(C)(D), and OAC 5101:2-7-11 (A)(B)(C)(D)(E)(F) the Agency agrees that every child has the right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or to abstain from the practice of religion.

PROCEDURES:

The Agency shall, in consultation with the parent, guardian and/or legal custodian, make available to a child in substitute care, cultural or ethnic activities appropriate to the child's cultural or ethnic background.

The Agency will consider and be sensitive to the racial, cultural, ethnic, and religious background of a child in out-of-home care and of families receiving services.

A substitute caregiver shall provide each child the opportunity to practice the chosen religious beliefs and faith of the child or his/her family, unless it is determined and documented in the child's case plan by the custodial agency that practicing the child's or family's chosen religious beliefs and faith is not in the child's best interests, and shall not subject a child to any form of religious coercion. The child will also have the option of not participating in any practice of religion.

Likewise, substitute caregivers shall not submit a child to any religious procedures, including baptism, without the prior consent of the child, as appropriate based on their age and functioning level, and without obtaining the prior approval of the child's parent, guardian or custodian.

The Agency shall not require a child in substitute care to receive non-emergency medical treatment which conflicts with the religious tenets or practices of the religion of the child or parent without the specific written consent of the parent, guardian or custodian.

When a child in a substitute care setting requires emergency medical treatment and such treatment conflicts with the religious tenets or practices of the child, parent, guardian or custodian, the substitute caregiver shall immediately transport or arrange for transportation of the child to a medical facility and contact the custodial agency or the individual who placed the child. The Agency, in turn, will make reasonable efforts to reach the parent, guardian or custodian to make the decision to treat the child and only when the Agency is unable to do so in a timely manner shall a decision to treat the child be made.

DEFINITIONS:

Coercion, as defined in the OAC, includes but is not limited to the following examples:

- Being required to accompany the foster care giver or other residents of the family foster home to religious services, but allowed to sit outside the area where the service actually occurs;
- Being given extra chores to perform or required to read or listen to specific material while others attend religious services;
- Being required to view or listen to specific religiously oriented television, video tapes or music.

RESPITE CARE FOR CHILDREN IN SPECIALIZED FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

Respite programs provide planned short-term and time-limited breaks for families in order to support and maintain the primary care giving relationship between the specialized caregivers and the children placed in their home.

POLICY STATEMENT:

In accordance with OAC 5101:2-5-13, Richland County Children Services provides for access to both planned and crisis respite care, the amount to be determined on a case-by-case basis, for children in the specialized foster care program.

PROCEDURES:

Respite care must be approved by the Program Manager or designee. A Respite plan will be developed within 30 days of placement of a child and shall be documented in the child’s Individual Service Plan.

All respite care providers will be licensed foster parents with appropriate training and experience. Respite care providers will be identified for each foster family based on the type of foster care license they hold and the type of children they have placed in their home.

Only approved respite care providers will be utilized for children in the specialized foster care program.

Respite care may not last for more than two consecutive weeks unless the provider is certified as a specialized foster caregiver, and the Program Manager approves the extended respite.

Prior to each episode of respite care, the Agency will provide the respite care provider with a copy of the JFS 01443, "Child's Education and Health Information" completed for the child pursuant to rule 5101:2-39-082 of the administrative code as part of his case plan and at least a written summary of the child's service plan. In addition, for a medically fragile child, any nursing treatment plan containing physician orders shall be provided. Documentation that this has been done shall be maintained in the child's case record.

For each episode of respite care, the respite care provider shall provide a written report of the child's stay in respite care to the child's regular, ongoing specialized foster caregiver. A respite care provider for a medically fragile child shall be certified as a foster caregiver for medically fragile children or be a licensed medical professional.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Specialized caregivers provide care to foster children. At times the physical and emotional strain for a caregiver can be overwhelming without some support, such as respite. Respite provides a break for the caregiver.

SOCIALIZATION AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

POLICY STATEMENT:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-7-11, the agency will ensure that all school-age children are enrolled in a school which complies with the minimum standards as prescribed by the State Board of Education.

PROCEDURES:

Education

The substitute caregiver is responsible to ensure that each child attend a school that complies with the minimum standards as prescribed by the State Board of Education and shall ensure that the child attends school in accordance with the child care agreement and as required by law.

A substitute caregiver that provides home schooling for a child shall do so only with the approval of the Agency. If home schooling is approved, it shall be approved by the public school district in which the substitute caregiver resides.

The substitute caregivers will participate in the child's parent / teacher conferences and educational planning meetings, as well as attend performances and special events in which the child is participating.

School Enrollment

The substitute caregiver may enroll the child in the local public school in consultation with the child's caseworker. The caseworker will provide the child's birth certificate and other background information which the school may request in order to enroll the child. The school and caseworker

will work together to ensure that school records are transferred, if needed. All foster children are eligible for the free school lunch program. In addition, schools may waive the cost of school fees upon presentation of the child's medical card. School fees usually include those fees charged by the school to purchase workbooks, art supplies, etc.

Free Lunch

Foster children are eligible for the free lunch program. Applications for the free lunch program can be obtained from the school principal or secretary. The child's name and the information that he or she is a foster child is required but information on the foster family and the foster family income is not necessary. The application can be returned directly to the school unless the school requests that the Agency director sign the form.

Socialization

Substitute caregivers are expected to encourage children to participate in community, school, recreational, and cultural heritage activities which are appropriate to their age and functional level. As is necessary and reasonable, substitute caregivers are also expected to transport or arrange appropriate transportation for the child to such activities.

A substitute caregiver shall, as appropriate, teach a child tasks and skills required for living in the community, and assign responsibilities and privileges to the children similar to those which would be assigned to a family member of the substitute caregiver who is of similar age and functioning level.

A child under two years of age must be given regular opportunities for individual attention and physical contact with a caring adult. A child under two years of age must be given consistent and regular opportunities for safe and comfortable participation in developmental activities such as: crawling, walking, and playing as appropriate to his age and developmental ability. A child under two years of age must also be supplied with safe play items appropriate to his age and developmental ability.

Substitute caregivers are expected to work cooperatively with agency staff in conducting an independent living skills assessment with adolescents age 16 and over. When appropriate the substitute caregiver shall teach a child tasks and skills required for life in the community.

PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATION

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to 5101:2-5-13, RCCS ensures that psychotropic medication provided to children in the Agency's custody are authorized by the Executive Director or Designee and guarantees that children receiving psychotropic medications are routinely monitored by the prescribing physician. RCCS only approves psychotropic medication for a child in the Agency's custody when medically indicated and will not approve its use as a means of punishment or control.

POLICY STATEMENT:

RCCS only approves a child in the Agency's custody to be placed on psychotropic medication when there is a psychological/psychiatric evaluation or a diagnostic assessment performed by an

appropriate, credentialed professional indicating the diagnosis and a specific need for the medication clearly stated. This evaluation must be completed prior to administration or initiation of the medication.

Any child who enters the Agency's custody and is currently prescribed a psychotropic medication will continue on the medication without interruption while arrangements are made to obtain documentation from the prescribing physician and obtain approval from Executive Director.

No child in the custody of Richland County Children Services shall be prescribed or given psychotropic medication for the sole purpose of behavioral control.

PROCEDURES:

Substitute Caregiver will:

- Inform the Agency Nurse of date, time and place of appointment, if known, prior to the child's appointment that psychotropic medication(s) may be prescribed.
- Notify the child's caseworker and Agency Nurse as soon as possible when the child's physician prescribes any medication intended to control the child's behavior.
- Obtain and administer psychotropic medication in accordance with the prescription after authorization by the Executive Director.
- Inform the prescribing physician and follow their instructions if a child refuses to take their prescribed psychotropic medication. Notification should occur as soon as possible but no later than within twenty-four (24) hours.
- Inform the caseworker and Agency Nurse if a child refuses to take a psychotropic medication. Notification should occur within 24 hours and an incident report shall be completed by the caseworker.
- Accompany child to all follow-up appointments.
- Notify caseworker and Agency Nurse of any medication or physician changes.

Assigned Caseworker will:

- Within 7 days of a child being placed on a psychotropic medication or changes to this medication, the caseworker shall inform the parents of this administration and document this notification.
- Contact Agency Nurse when a child enters RCCS custody and is taking a psychotropic medication or a physician is considering placing a child already in RCCS custody on psychotropic medication.
- Provide the Agency Nurse with the physician's name and address.
- Schedule a diagnostic assessment, psychological, or psychiatric assessment if a recent assessment and report was not completed or not available.
- Accompany child, if possible, to the initial appointment and follow up appointments when indicated.
- Notify the substitute caregiver when the Executive Director has approved administration of medication.

- Maintain ongoing contact with substitute caregiver and Agency Nurse to ensure that information the caregiver and Agency Nurse have concerning the child's medication and reactions is current and accurate, that appropriate authorizations have been obtained and child is receiving medication as prescribed.
- Notify Agency Nurse of medication or physician changes. Change notices will be initialed by assigned caseworker, supervisor and Agency nurse prior to being submitted to the Executive Director for approval and implementation.
- Notify Agency Nurse if a child refuses to take his prescribed psychotropic medication.
- Inform and remind the caregiver that they must contact the prescribing physician immediately or take the child to their doctor, when a child is refusing to take their medication.

Agency Nurse will:

- Obtain a diagnostic assessment, psychological/ psychiatric report and the Psychotropic Medication Authorization, completed by the physician.
- Consult with physician's staff if there are questions or concerns about the psychotropic medication prescription.
- Obtain the Executive Director's authorization on medication authorization form sent by provider after all information is obtained and reviewed.
- Notify the caseworker and/or the substitute caregiver of approval to start medication administration.
- Create and maintain a psychotropic medication file for all children for whom psychotropic medication has been prescribed and approved and document in SACWIS.
- Obtain written progress reports from the prescribing physician.
- Attend Family Team Meetings or Team Decision-Making Meetings for children currently prescribed psychotropic medication when requested.
- Document in SACWIS and in the psychotropic medication file when a child refuses medication. **Note: RCCS Executive Director will** review requests for psychotropic medications submitted by Agency Nurse; and, if determined that medication is appropriate, return all information to Agency Nurse with a signed Psychotropic Medication Authorization form.

Key Program Staff will:

Key program staff, including the Assistant Director, Program Manager, and Agency Nurse, will meet on a quarterly basis to review the utilization of psychotropic medications for those children in care and provide the Executive Director with a summary of each meeting, which includes conclusions or recommendations.

These reviews will address, but not be limited to:

- Children's need for psychotropic medication
- Children's response to psychotropic medication

- Change in children’s behavior

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

When making these decisions, the Executive Director or Designee shall utilize a Prudent Parent Standard.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

PURPOSE:

The “Independent Living” procedure is to ensure that all youth in the Agency’s custody or who have emancipated from Agency custody receive independent living services per OAC 5101:2-42-19 and 5101:2-42-19.2 and Public Law 113-183, “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act”.

PROCEDURES:

Independent Living services shall be provided to each youth in the Agency’s custody who has attained the age of fourteen to prepare them for the transition from Agency custody to self-sufficiency.

The Agency shall conduct a life skills assessment on each youth in Agency custody who has reached age fourteen. The assessment shall be completed no later than sixty days after the youth’s fourteenth birthday or sixty days after the youth enters Agency custody, whichever is first. A life skills assessment shall establish the need for independent living services. The life skills assessment shall be completed with documented input from the youth, the youth’s caregiver, and the youth’s caseworker.

Independent living services, based on the assessment, include but is not limited to:

1. Academic support, including academic counseling, preparation for a GED, assistance in applying for or studying for a GED exam, tutoring, homework help, study skills training, literacy training and help accessing educational resources.
2. Post-secondary educational supports, including classes for test preparation, counseling about college, information about financial aid and scholarships, help completing college or loan applications and tutoring while in college.
3. Career preparation, including vocational and career assessment, career exploration and planning, guidance in setting and assessing vocational and career interests and skills and help in matching interests and abilities with vocational goals, job seeking and job placement support, identifying potential employers, writing resumes, completing job applications, developing interview skills, job shadowing, receiving job referrals, using career resource libraries, understanding employee benefits coverage, securing work permits, retention support, job coaching, learning how to work with employers and other employees,

understanding workplace values such as timeliness and appearance, and understanding authority and customer relationships.

4. Employment programs or vocational training, including participation in an apprenticeship, internship or summer employment program, participation in vocational or trade programs and the receipt of training in occupational classes for such skills as cosmetology, auto mechanics, building trades, nursing, computer science, and other current or emerging employment sectors.
5. Budget and financial management, including living within a budget, opening and using a checking/savings account, balancing a checkbook, developing consumer awareness and smart shopping skills, accessing information about credit, loans and taxes, and filling out tax forms. For each child in the custody of the Agency who has attained the age of fourteen, the Independent Living Coordinator will request a credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies each year until the child is discharged from substitute care.
6. Housing, education and home management training, including assistance or training in locating and maintaining housing, filling out a rental application and acquiring a lease, handling security deposits and utilities, understanding practices for keeping a healthy and safe home, understanding tenants' rights and responsibilities, handling landlord complaints and instruction in food preparation, laundry, housekeeping, living cooperatively, meal planning, grocery shopping and basic maintenance and repairs.
7. Health education and risk prevention, including hygiene, nutrition, fitness/exercise, and first aid information.
8. Medical and dental care benefits, health care resources and insurance, prenatal care and maintaining personal medical records.
9. Sex education, abstinence education, HIV prevention, education and information about sexual development and sexuality, pregnancy prevention, information about family planning and sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, substance abuse prevention and intervention (including education and information about the effects and consequences of using substances such as alcohol, drugs, and tobacco), and substance avoidance and intervention.
10. Family support and healthy marriage education, including education and information about safe and stable families, spousal communication, parenting, responsible fatherhood, childcare skills, teen parenting and domestic and family violence prevention.
11. Mentoring, including being matched with a screened and trained adult for a one-on-one relationship that involves the two meeting on a regular basis. Mentoring can be short-term but may also support the development of a long-term relationship.

12. Supervised independent living, including a youth who is living independently under a supervised arrangement paid for or provided by the Agency.
13. Room and board financial assistance for rent deposits, utilities, and other household start-up expenses.

The Agency shall develop a written independent living plan within 30 days of the completion of the assessment to help the youth achieve self-sufficiency. The plan shall be based upon the assessment including the developmental age of the child, input from the youth, the youth's caseworker, the caregiver, and significant others in the youth's life. The independent living plan shall document the limitations and resources of the youth and outline the services to be provided. The independent living plan shall be reviewed at least every 90 days thereafter until the Agency's custody is terminated. A copy of the plan and any subsequent updates shall be provided to the youth and caregiver within 30 days of the development of the plan or the update as applicable.

The Agency shall include in the independent living plan the contact information including but not limited to the names, addresses and phone numbers of significant others, such as former foster parents, friends, mentors, child's attorney, GAL/CASA and extended family members as provided by the young adult. A family genogram may also be included.

The Agency shall ensure the following **initial information** is documented and entered into SACWIS within the youth's first year of custody and any subsequent updates shall be documented within 30 days:

1. All services provided to the youth;
2. Youth characteristics, including education levels, tribal membership, delinquency adjudication, special education, and medical conditions;
3. Basic demographics of the youth, including gender, race and ethnicity;
4. The Agency shall document and enter in SACWIS the date the independent living assessment and the independent living plan were completed. All review dates of the independent living plan shall be documented and entered in SACWIS.
5. The Agency, prior to the youth's emancipation, shall provide the foster youth who is aging out the system with a copy of their health and education records and documentation that the youth was in the custody of the Agency at the time of emancipation. The Agency shall document in SACWIS the date the youth received the health and education records and the verification that the youth was in the Agency's custody at the time of emancipation.

Ninety (90) days prior to the youth's emancipation from the Agency's custody, the Agency shall work with the youth to develop a **final transition plan**. The plan shall be youth-driven and as detailed as the youth chooses. The plan shall include information regarding:

1. The youth's option to receive post emancipation services provided or arranged by the Agency;
2. Health care, including health insurance, health care power of attorney and youth's option to execute power of attorney;
3. Employment services;
4. Secondary and post-secondary education and training;
5. Obtaining and paying for housing;
6. Budgeting for necessary living expenses;
7. Obtaining a credit report;
8. Registering for selective service;
9. Obtaining a driver's license;
10. Any existing court fees associated with the youth's name prior to emancipation;
11. Any existing benefits the youth receives, such as but not limited to social security benefits. If necessary, the Agency shall review with the youth, instructions on how to apply for continuation of those benefits.

Prior to the youth's emancipation for the Agency's custody, the Agency shall coordinate with the following agencies to obtain necessary documents:

- The Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics, to ensure the youth obtains an original birth certificate;
- The Social Security Administration, to ensure the youth obtains an original social security card;
- The Bureau of Motor Vehicles, to ensure the youth obtains a current state identification card.

The Agency shall document in SACWIS the date in which the youth was provided a copy of the transition plan along with a copy of the youth's health and education records and a letter verifying that the youth emancipated from the Agency's custody.

The Agency shall, when requested, provide services and support to former foster care recipients who emancipated from the Agency's custody due to attaining eighteen (18) years of age. The Agency shall evaluate the strengths and needs of the young adult to determine the services to be offered. The services and supports are to complement the young adult's own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and shall be available until the young adult's twenty-first (21) birthday.

Based on this evaluation, the Agency and the young adult shall develop a mutually agreed on written plan for the provision of services. The plan shall clearly outline the responsibilities of the young adult and the Agency. The written plan shall be signed by the young adult and a representative of the Agency.

The Agency shall include or update contact information in the written plan on any of the youth's connections with significant other, such as former foster parents, friends, mentors and extended family members. The contact information shall include names addresses and phone numbers, whenever known and shall be documented in SACWIS.

Before the Agency provides services to a young adult between the ages of 18 and 21 years, the Agency shall explore and coordinate services with other community resources.

The Agency shall make available the following **independent living services to young adults aged 18 to 21 years**, including but not limited to:

1. Academic support, including academic counseling, preparation for a GED, assistance in applying for or studying for a GED exam, tutoring, homework help, study skills training, literacy training and help accessing educational resources;
2. Post-secondary educational support, including classes for test preparation, counseling about college, information about financial aid and scholarships, help completing college or loan applications and tutoring while in college;
3. Career preparation, including vocational and career assessment, career exploration and planning, guidance in setting and assessing vocational and career interests and skills and help in matching interests and abilities with vocational goals, job seeking and job placement support, identifying potential employers, writing resumes, completing job applications, developing interview skills, job shadowing, receiving job referrals, using career resource libraries, understanding employee benefits coverage, and securing work permits, retention support, and job coaching, learning how to work with employers and other employees, understanding workplace values such as timeliness and appearance, and understanding authority and customer relationships;
4. Employment programs or vocational training, including participation in an apprenticeship, internship or summer employment program, participation in vocational or trade programs and the receipt of training in occupational classes for such skills as cosmetology, auto mechanics, building trades, nursing, computer science, and other current or emerging employment sectors.
5. Budget and financial management, including living within a budget, opening and using a checking/savings account, balancing a checkbook, developing consumer awareness and smart shopping skills, accessing information about credit, loans and taxes, and filling out tax forms;
6. Housing, education and home management training, including assistance or training in locating and maintaining housing, filling out a rental application and acquiring a lease, handling security deposits and utilities, understanding practices for keeping a healthy and safe home, understanding tenants' rights and responsibilities, handling landlord complaints

- and instruction in food preparation, laundry, housekeeping, living cooperatively, meal planning, grocery shopping and basic maintenance and repairs;
7. Health education and risk prevention, including hygiene, nutrition, fitness/exercise, and first aid information. Medical and dental care benefits, health care resources and insurance, prenatal care and maintaining personal medical records. Sex education, abstinence education, HIV prevention, education and information about sexual development and sexuality, pregnancy prevention, information about family planning and sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, substance abuse prevention and intervention (including education and information about the effects and consequences of using substances such as alcohol, drugs, and tobacco), and substance avoidance and intervention;
 8. Mentoring, including being matched with a screened and trained adult for a one-on-one relationship that involves the two meeting on a regular basis. Mentoring can be short-term, but may also support the development of a long-term relationship;
 9. Supervised independent living, including a youth who is living independently under a supervised arrangement paid for or provided by the Agency. A youth in supervised independent living is not supervised 24 hours a day by an adult and often is provided with increased responsibilities, such as paying bills, assuming leases, and working with a landlord, while under the supervision of an adult;
 10. Room and board financial assistance, including room and board financial assistance that is a payment paid for or provided by the Agency for room and board, rent deposits, utilities, and other household start-up expenses;
 11. Education financial assistance, including educational financial assistance that is a payment paid for or provided by the Agency for education or training, allowances to purchase textbooks, uniforms, computers, and other educational supplies; tuition assistance; scholarships; payment for educational preparation and support services, and payment for GED and other educational tests. The financial assistance also includes vouchers for tuition or vocational education or tuition waiver programs paid for or provided by the Agency;
 12. Other financial assistance, including financial assistance for any other payments made or provided by the Agency to help the youth live independently.

The Agency may use up to 30% of its federal independent living allocation for room and board for 18 to 21 year old emancipated young adults.

Room and board may include, but is not limited to assistance with rent, initial rent deposit, utilities and utility deposits. Under no circumstances shall the Agency use any of its independent living allocation for room and board for youth under the age of eighteen years or past the young adult's twenty-first birthday.

The Agency shall provide a copy of the Agency's grievance policy to each young adult who requests independent living services from the Agency.

The Agency shall ensure that youth who have reached age nineteen or twenty-one years are participating in state and federal studies in accordance with ODJFS and inform the youth, how to access the survey and the benefits of participating in the survey including, increase youth financial self-sufficiency, improve youth education, academic or vocational attainment, increase youth

connections with adults, reduce homelessness among youth, reduce high-risk behavior among youth, improve youth access to health insurance and that they may be eligible for an incentive once they complete the survey.

DEATH OF A CHILD IN CUSTODY OR RECEIVING AGENCY SERVICES

POLICY STATEMENT:

Richland County Children Services, hereafter referred to as the Agency, is committed to responding in a timely manner to the death of a child in the Agency's custody or receiving agency services.

Pursuant to 5101:2-42-89; the Agency, will take required actions when a child in custody or receiving agency services dies.

PROCEDURES:

- (1) Substitute caregivers shall contact the Agency immediately following the death of a child in care.
- (2) The Agency will notify the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction within one hour of its knowledge of the child's death pursuant to rule 5101:2-33-26 of the Administrative Code.
- (3) The Agency will complete the JFS 01987 "Child Fatality Report Face Sheet" and send it to ODJFS within five working day after receiving the report. The JFS 01987 shall be sent electronically as directed by the JFS 01987I "Instructions for completing JFS 01987 child fatality report face sheet" (rev. 10/2009).
- (4) The Agency will notify the local health department and/or the child fatality review board.
- (5) The Agency shall contact the parent, guardian, or custodian upon the receipt of knowledge that a child in the Agency's Temporary Custody or Planned Permanent Living Arrangement has died.
- (6) If a child in the Agency's Permanent Custody dies, birth parents and/or family may be contacted on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Executive Director.
- (7) The Agency shall notify the juvenile court and local law enforcement agency with jurisdiction upon its knowledge of the death of a child in custody.

When the death of a child is the result of suspected child abuse or neglect, the Agency shall follow procedures set forth in its "Memorandum of Understanding" pursuant to rule 5101-2-33-26 of the Administrative Code regarding children with:

- Suspected child abuse and neglect as determined by law enforcement, medical or Agency personnel.
- Prior involvement with the Agency or any member of the household including:
 - Open in-home voluntary cases.
 - Open court ordered protective supervision.

- Open intake assessments within twelve months of the fatality.
- A closed, inactive case within twelve months of the fatality.

The Agency shall complete part three of the JFS 01987 and send electronically to the assigned ODJFS regional field office.

The Agency shall maintain documentation regarding the provision of notices as required by this rule in the child's case record and the custodial agency's provider record.

Documentation regarding the provision of the above listed notifications shall be maintained in the child's case record.

For children in the Agency's Permanent Custody, funeral arrangements will be made at the expense of the Agency after exploring all available financial resources for the funeral expenses.

For children in the Agency's Temporary Custody or Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, the Agency shall assist the family in planning funeral arrangements if so requested. If funeral costs pose a financial hardship to the family, the Agency may elect to assist the family with the costs on a case by case basis.

DISCHARGE FROM SUBSTITUTE CARE

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A)(17), the Agency shall have a written policy which describes the conditions under which, and the procedure by which, a child will be discharged from an out-of-home care setting including any criteria for emergency discharges and discharges not in accordance with a child's service plan. The assigned worker will conduct the exit interview and discuss any concerns noted with the case supervisor and/or foster care worker.

PROCEDURES:

When the child's family satisfactorily complies with the requirements of the case plan, and reunification assessment has been completed, the foster family will be notified of the Agency's recommendation regarding discharge from foster care at least five days prior to the review hearing. Advance notice is not required if a court terminates custody on its own accord, or the substitute caregiver agrees to a lesser advance notice. Documentation of the notification to a caregiver (written or oral) shall be maintained in the child's case record.

While in substitute care, a child may be on leave from his or her current placement for a trial visit with his or her parents, guardian or custodian up to sixty consecutive days.

Once discharge occurs caseworker for the child **shall conduct a face to face exit interview** utilizing the JFS 01678 "Foster Care Exit Interview" **with every child age 5 and older**, as developmentally appropriate, **within seven days after the child's exit from each foster care placement.**

The Agency is not required to complete the exit interview:

- When children in their custody are moved from residential care facilities or non-licensed providers.
- When a child was in placement for less than 24 hours.
- When the child's placement type changes from foster care to adoption and the child remains in the same home.

The Agency shall complete the JFS 01678 and place it in the child's record and the caregiver's record. If the caregiver is not certified by RCCS, the Agency shall send a copy of the form to the recommending agency of the caregiver within seven days of the completed interview.

IF the child alleges abuse, neglect or any maltreatment during the exit interview, the interviewer shall make a report in accordance with section 2151.421 of the Revised Code.

Upon receipt of the form, the recommending agency shall discuss concerns with the foster parent. If deemed necessary by the recommending agency, an action plan shall be developed within 30 days of the date the Agency was notified of the concern. The plan may include but is not limited to providing more intense supervision, support, or training for the caregiver. If the concern warrants a rule violation investigation, the rule 5101:2-5-28 of the Administrative Code shall apply and may result in more formal enforcement, up to an including revocation of the foster home certificate.

The Agency will provide the following services to prepare the child and his/her parent, guardian, custodian when the child is to be returned home, which shall include, but not limited to:

- Arranging visits or other contact as needed between the parent, guardian, custodian and child to discuss what has transpired between the time of initial placement and the present;
- Increasing the length and number of home visits to help the child become reacquainted with his/her family, when applicable;
- Providing emotional support for feelings the child may have about leaving the substitute caregiver;
- When termination of substitute care occurs, those services offered to and provided to the child and his/her parent, guardian, custodian in preparation for the child's reunification, adoption, or emancipation shall be noted in the child's case record;
- The caseworker must notify JFS when the child has been returned home and custody has been terminated;
- The caseworker shall provide the parent, guardian, custodian, pre-finalized adoptive parent, or a child who is emancipated with a copy of the child's health care record upon termination of the child's custody. The caseworker shall provide the parent, guardian, custodian, pre-finalized adoptive parent, or a child who is emancipated with information about the Healthcheck program, if the child was in the Healthcheck program during the child's stay in substitute care.

When the foster family requests a removal of a child due to a change in family circumstances or their inability to cope with the child's behavior, the foster family will notify their foster care worker in writing at least 14 days prior to the date of the pending removal, in order to facilitate a planned move for the child. At this time a Team Decision Meeting (TDM) will occur at the Agency.

When the Agency determines that the family is unable to meet the child's needs, the circumstances precipitating the removal will be considered along with the child's needs in determining the haste of the move.

When a youth indicates to their caseworker that they do not wish to remain in foster care after their 18th birthday; the child, foster family, Independent Living caseworker, and other treatment team members will meet to determine the condition of discharge. This will occur prior to the child's 18th birthday. If, after turning 18 years, the youth chooses not to stay in their foster home, the discharge is the date the 18 year old youth leaves the residence. The youth will continue to be eligible for Independent Living services until age 21.

Removal from a foster home will not be considered solely because the child chooses not to be in a particular home.

Emergency discharges and discharges not in accordance with a child's service plan are handled on a case-by-case basis and will be in the child's best interest. The parent, guardian, or custodian, out-of-home setting caretaker and guardian ad litem will be notified immediately and within no more than 24 hours. A Case Plan Amendment will be completed for any removal from a substitute care setting.

DISCHARGE FROM A PURCHASED FOSTER CARE HOME, GROUP HOME OR RESIDENTIAL CARE SETTING

With the successful completion of the goals identified on the child's initial service plan and/or subsequent treatment plans, the facility and the Agency will reach a mutual agreement about the date of discharge.

When a treatment facility believes that they cannot make any more progress with the child due to the child's behavior, the facility will informally discuss their clinical conclusions with the Agency and must give the Agency written notice 30 days prior to the child's discharge.

If a child presents a substantial danger to himself or others and present serious safety issues, the facility will immediately notify the Agency and appropriate law enforcement agencies and when deemed appropriate, mental health provider and/or emergency medical services. The Agency will refer the child to a law enforcement officer or a mental health professional/crisis team for assessment and possible placement at a detention facility or hospitalization as quickly as possible. If the facility moves a child to a more or less restrictive placement setting, they must consult with the Agency in advance of such a move. In all cases, the Agency is to have written notification of any move within 24 hours.

When the Agency determines that continued placement is not in the child's best interests, the Agency will inform the facility of the plan to move the child at least 14 days prior to discharge.

When a youth reaches age 18 and chooses to leave the facility, the Agency will inform the facility of the youth's decision and will reach a mutual agreement concerning the date of departure.

When a child is discharged from a residential treatment facility or specialized foster home, a discharge summary will be completed and provided to the Agency no later than 10 days after the discharge summary is completed.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services is committed to ensuring that children in the Agency's custody receive routine medical care which meets state mandates. OAC 5101:2-42-66.1.

PROCEDURES:

Initial Health Screening

When a child is placed in the custody of the Agency, the assigned case worker **must** contact the Agency nurse to schedule an initial health screening. The health screening must be conducted within 24 hours of initial custody. The Agency nurse shall document the health screening and pertinent information in SACWIS. If the child is released into Agency custody from any type of medical facility, the discharge summary will serve as the initial health screening. If the Agency nurse is not available to complete the screening it must be completed at an urgent care or ER within 24 hours of the Agency receiving custody.

60 Day Comprehensive Health Care Exam

In accordance with OAC 5101:2-42-66.1 a child placed in Agency custody will receive a 60-day comprehensive physical exam, including vision and hearing screenings, unless the child has had a documented comprehensive exam within three (3) months of placement. The Agency nurse will coordinate this appointment with the provider and caregiver to ensure it is completed within 60 days.

Dental Exam

Children in the Agency's custody who are over the age of three **must** be seen by a dentist within 6 months of the custody order. The Agency nurse will schedule the appointment with the dentist and notify foster parents of appointment. Thereafter, the child shall attend routine follow-up appointments every six months, or more frequently if dental needs indicate.

Additional Screening Requirements

The assigned worker will refer all children in Agency custody under the age of three for Help Me Grow Services, which will provide a developmental screening for the child to determine eligibility for services.

The assigned worker will refer children in Agency custody for mental health and drug/alcohol screening when needs are indicated, to be conducted by the appropriate community service agency within 30 days.

Completion of the ODJFS 1443

For all children in Agency custody, the assigned caseworker will complete a Health History Information Form with the child's parents/family and submit the completed form to the Agency Nurse. The Agency Nurse will create a 1443 form for the child in SACWIS and will mail a copy of the form to the child's parents and substitute caregivers.

The 1443 will also be mailed out to parents and substitute caregivers by the assigned caseworker at the time of any placement moves and SAR's.

The placement caseworker will print the 1443's off SACWIS to review during the SAR. The 1443 will be mailed to parents and substitute caregivers along with the completed SAR.

Routine Medical Care

Children in Agency custody will receive medical care according to the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule; at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, and 30 months. The Agency Nurse will coordinate with the child's foster parents to schedule these appointments.

Children in the Agency's custody must have an annual physical, which is to occur no later than 30 days from the anniversary date of the child's original comprehensive physical exam. This will be coordinated between Agency Nurse and foster parents.

Any child in an out-of-county placement will receive medical/dental care in the county in which they are placed. When the routine medical care is being provided through a contracted agency, that agency will provide the assigned caseworker with medical records to comply with this procedure. The caseworker will provide a copy of the medical records to the Agency Nurse, who will update SACWIS to reflect the medical care.

Illness/Injury

Foster parents and/or the assigned caseworker will schedule appointments as necessary to treat any illness or injury of a child in care. In the event a child in the Agency's custody needs emergency medical treatment, the foster parent will take the child to an urgent care or ER for treatment and contact RCCS to report the incident. The assigned caseworker will complete an incident report documenting the illness or injury to the child and will obtain all medical records from the treatment provider.

MISSING CHILDREN IN AGENCY CUSTODY OR ATTEMPTS TO REMOVE A CHILD FROM THE FOSTER HOME

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services (the Agency) is committed to ensuring the safety of children in the Agency's custody. The Agency will comply with Ohio Administrative Code rules which require that missing and Absent Without Leave (AWOL) children in the custody of the Agency be reported to law enforcement and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

PROCEDURES:

Duties of the Foster Parent

When a foster parent determines that a child is AWOL, removed, or attempted to be removed from their home by any person or agency other than RCCS, they must immediately report it to the assigned caseworker. If the caseworker is unavailable, they must make the report to the worker's direct supervisor, or the supervisor of the day. If after-hours, the foster parent must report the AWOL or missing child to the after-hours supervisor by calling 419-522-HELP.

1. Duties of the Case Worker/Agency Staff Member upon Notification from Foster Parent

- A. The Agency staff member will advise the foster parent on what steps to take next. Based on the specific circumstances of the report the directions from the Agency staff member may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Wait a specified period of time to see if the child returns to the foster home.
 - Contact child's friends, family members where the child may have gone
 - Contact the child's probation officer and request that a warrant is issued
 - File a police report to document the child is missing
- B. Any staff member who receives a report of a missing or AWOL child shall immediately report missing child to the program manager, who will inform the Assistant Director and Executive Director.
- C. Once the assigned caseworker is notified that a child is AWOL from a substitute placement they shall immediately, and in no case later than twenty-four hours:
 - Notify the child's family,
 - Notify the child's probation officer,
 - File a Police Report
 - Contact Law Enforcement for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.
 - Contact supervisor regarding entry into The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
 - Complete a **critical incident report** and submit it within 24 hours to the Program Manager or Assistant Director, in the Program Manager's absence.

2. Duties of the Case Worker – Ongoing

- A. The assigned caseworker will make at least one 'good faith' attempt daily to locate the missing child until they are found. A 'good faith' attempt is a legitimate attempt to locate the child, and may include one or more of the following:
 - Contacting law enforcement for an update;
 - Contacting the child's family, friends, or significant others with whom the child

may maintain contact while on the run

- Attempting visits at any location where the caseworker believes the child may be staying;
- Searching any neighborhood where the child is likely to be found.

B. The caseworker must document the following information in the child's case record:

- The date, time and name of the law enforcement agency contacted.
- The date and time NCMEC was contacted.
- The last known location of the child.
- The length of time the child has been AWOL.
- Anyone the child may have been with prior to or during AWOL.
- Efforts and resources used to locate the child.

3. Duties of the Case Worker when youth has been located

A. After locating a missing or AWOL child, the caseworker must ensure the child submits to a drug/alcohol test, a medical check, and an STD/AIDS test, where such tests can reasonably be believed to provide useful information.

B. Within three (3) days of locating the missing child, a team meeting will be held to discuss the supervision needs of the child and develop a plan to keep the child safe by limiting their ability to run away again. When the child is returned to a foster home, the assigned caseworker will review the supervision needs of the child with the foster parents.

C. Upon the child's return from AWOL, the caseworker shall address and document in the child's case record the following information:

- The circumstances that contributed to the child running away or being absent from care.
- The events or experiences that took place while the child was AWOL, including if the child is found to be a sex trafficking victim and shall follow procedural requirements pursuant to rule 5101:2-36-12 of the Administrative Code.
- The caseworker will send a copy within fourteen days of the documentation identified in this rule to the foster care giver as well as keep a copy in the child's case record.

4. Duties of the Supervisor

A. The supervisor of the case will disperse a picture of the missing child to other agency staff so that they can be on the lookout for the missing child.

B. The supervisor will ensure that the caseworker follows the procedure outlined above.

- C. The supervisor will ensure that management is informed.
- D. The supervisor will ensure that a missing child police report has been made, and that the missing child's information has been entered into The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) database. In the absence of the supervisor(s), the Program Manager, the Finance Director or MIS Manager will enter the child's information into NCMEC. 1-800-843-5678 is the 24-hour hotline.
- E. Upon the child's return from AWOL, the supervisor or designated staff will update the information in the NCMEC database or contact the 24 hour hotline at 1800-843-5678.

INTERVIEWS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY LAW ENFORCEMENT

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services is committed to expediting interviews of children in custody who are alleged child victims and/or witnesses and collaborating with the police departments regarding these interviews.

PROCEDURES:

The following factors will be considered if a Law Enforcement Officer desires to interview a child in the custody of Richland County Children Services (RCCS) custody

1. During business hours, Law Enforcement Officer will contact Caseworker through RCCS switchboard (419-774-4100) or by caseworker's direct extension, if known. If the Caseworker is not available, the Law Enforcement Officer will request the Caseworker's supervisor, program supervisor or supervisor of the day. Person contacted (caseworker's, supervisor, etc.) immediately will contact foster home or other placement and arrange to meet with Law Enforcement Officer, foster parent and child at station ASAP. The RCCS representative will be present at the location where the foster child is scheduled to be interviewed by the police.
2. After business hours, the Law Enforcement Officer will make contact with the RCCS on-call supervisor through Helpline. The on-call supervisor will arrange for agency representative, child, and foster parent, if appropriate, to meet with Law Enforcement Officer at the station. The on-call person will be the Agency representative if necessary.
3. Under (1) and (2), above, the officer in charge of the investigation exercises final authority over whether the RCCS representative(s) is/are physically present in the interview. If not allowed in interview room, the RCCS representative(s) will be allowed to remain outside the interview and to communicate face-to-face with the child after the interview is completed.

4. If a Law Enforcement Officer interviews a child in RCCS custody at the scene or otherwise without RCCS personnel present, that Law Enforcement Officer will make direct contact with RCCS ASAP after the interview, following the calling procedures set forth in (1) or (2), above, as appropriate.
5. RCCS will distribute clear instructions to:
The foster parents that they cannot prohibit police interviews of foster children, but that they should contact their caseworker or other RCCS personnel immediately if an interview is requested; and that they will not delay such interviews while awaiting contact except for any delays inherent in following steps (1) and/or (2), above.
6. The RCCS representative that was contacted regarding the police interview will report the interview request to their supervisor immediately, who will inform the respective program supervisor of the police interviewing request.

PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD

PURPOSE:

The Prudent Parent Standard was passed under the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, H.R. 4980 establishing a standard of normalcy for a child who is in Agency custody. The Prudent Parent Standard attempts to expand the opportunities for youth in foster care to participate in socially acceptable, age appropriate extracurricular activities in order to support the healthy development of youth in care through implementing a “reasonable and prudent parent standard for decision making by a foster parent(s) or designee.

The Prudent Parent Standard allows foster parent(s) to give their foster child(ren) permission to do daily, age appropriate activities that promote cognitive, emotional and behavioral growth, while helping foster children make the transition to adulthood by providing necessary life skills as they seek more independence.

PROCEDURES:

Decision-Making

Foster parent(s) shall consider the following when determining whether to permit a child to participate in an activity:

1. The child’s age, maturity, and developmental level to maintain overall health and safety of the child.
2. Potential risk factors and the appropriateness of the activity.
3. The best interest of the child based on the foster parent’s knowledge of the child.
4. The importance of encouraging the child’s emotional and developmental growth.
5. The importance of providing the child with the most family-like living experience possible and;

6. The behavioral history of the child and the child's ability to safely participate in the proposed activity.

Approved Activities

1. Allows foster parent(s) to make decisions regarding whether a child may engage in sports, field trips and overnight activities lasting 1 or more days.
2. Allowing foster parent(s) to sign permission slips and arrange for transportation for the child to and from social activities.
3. Foster parent(s) can hire a babysitter to care for a child(ren) for limited periods of time without extensive back ground checks.
4. Overnight stays with friends (sleepovers) or family
5. Allow contact with family outside of supervised visitation and already pre-approved by the Agency
6. Out of state travel (with foster parent(s), friends or school/social activities)
7. Obtaining a driver license and parameters of driving a vehicle or travel with other youth or adults.
8. Allow foster child to experience circumstances without direct supervision such as trips to the mall, or sporting events.
9. Obtaining a job such as babysitting, yard work etc.
10. Reasonable curfew
11. Dating
12. Ear Piercing
13. Hairstyles (other than normal cuts/coloring hair)
14. Obtain a cell phone
15. Allow child to have picture taken and participate in school newspaper or publications.

Provisions under the Law

1. Foster parent(s) must have all information regarding the child to determine what is in their best interest including any situation that may cause the child harm developmentally, emotionally or mentally.
2. Foster parent(s) must take into consideration religious/cultural beliefs of the child.
3. Requiring foster parents to observe and follow court orders and judgments which may impact those decisions.
4. Any decision made for the child cannot trump court orders or other related schedules (e.g., visitation with parents) unless otherwise approved by the Agency.
5. Requiring foster parents to engage in extra training including the knowledge and skills relating to the reasonable prudent parent standard.
6. Foster parent(s) are not liable for harm to the child as a result of the event/activity approved by them, as long as the foster parent(s) acted in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to define the parameters for Agency staff and foster caregivers when requesting permission to travel out-of-state with a child in the custody of Richland County Children Services and does not qualify within the prudent parenting standard.

PROCEDURES:

- A. When a foster caregiver requests permission to travel out-of-state with their foster child(ren) the assigned caseworker must fill out an Out-of-State Travel Permission form in its entirety. The worker must document the following on the form:
 1. The name of each child who would travel;
 2. The nature of the agency's custody (TOTC, TC, PC);
 3. The name of the foster parents;
 4. The travel destination;
 5. The dates of out-of-state travel;
 6. The plan for making up any visits or school that would be missed;
- B. The worker must attempt to secure permission of the child(ren)'s parent/s, and must document the efforts, and whether permission was given, on a Permission to Travel form and in SACWIS.
- C. The worker must submit the completed Permission to Travel form to the worker's supervisor for approval. The form must be submitted to and approved by the Program Manager, the Assistant Director, and the Executive Director. Once approved by the Executive Director, the Permission to Travel form will be returned to the caseworker.
- D. The worker will provide a copy of the approved Permission to Travel form to the foster parent to carry with them during travel. The worker must maintain a copy of the form in the case file.

ADOPTION

PURPOSE:

Richland County Children Services (RCCS) believes that all children deserve to be raised in a supportive family environment. Children in the permanent custody of the Agency have special needs and, as with all children, they need the security and stability of a family to develop to their fullest potential. The Agency educates and assesses families to provide permanent homes which meet the needs of the Agency's available children.

POLICY STATEMENT:

RCCS will conduct adoption home study assessments on any eligible family living in Richland County. Families with other special circumstances will be considered; for example, foster parents

actively licensed through RCCS, relatives who are currently caring for Richland County children but reside outside the county within a reasonable distance. If the distance is too great, RCCS will make a referral to the local public children service agency.

This adoption policy has been developed to govern the RCCS adoption program in accordance with the Ohio Administrative Code of Rules (OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A) (24)) established by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. All recruitment activities and materials will follow MEPA and Title VI, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 25 U.S.C.A.1901, et seq., as amended and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

The Agency will maintain compliance with Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, et. seq. The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 622(b) (9), 671(a) (18), 674(d) and 1996(b) (MEPA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et. seq., as they apply to the adoption process, do not supersede the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. The Agency will maintain compliance with 42 U.S.C. 671(a), the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No.105-89.

RCCS does not have a prerequisite of religious affiliation for adoptive applicants.

Private, Foreign and Independent Adoptions/Fees for Services

Due to the focus on recruitment and retention of homes for special needs children, the Agency does not have the resources to devote to conducting home studies for international and private adoptions. Thus, individuals who desire to pursue a foreign or private adoption will be referred to appropriate agencies specializing in these types of adoptions.

It is the policy of RCCS to accept only applications for special needs adoptions. However, if a family applies for special needs adoptions and the Agency provides training and conducts the home study and then the family pursues adoption of a typical child from another agency, RCCS will assess the following fee schedule for services rendered:

- Training and Home Study -\$900
- Pre-finalization, Finalization and Post Finalization Services - \$95

PROCEDURES:

Section A CRITERIA FOR MATCHING ADOPTIVE PARENTS TO AVAILABLE CHILDREN

Richland County's Adoption Unit includes the Program Manager, Foster/Adoption Supervisor, Foster care worker and Adoption caseworker. At least three members of the adoption unit will meet to determine which family is the most appropriate for the available children. When more than one agency is involved in an adoptive placement, a representative from each agency will participate in the placement decision. Adoptive placements are made with children who are in the permanent custody of RCCS. A completed approved home study is required as part of the adoption program. A child will only be placed in an adoptive home which meets the child's best interests and special needs. RCCS serves families that wish to adopt special needs children. RCCS will conduct a search of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System to find adoptive parents to match with available children. RCCS will engage in diligent child specific recruitment efforts to seek

suitable approved families to adopt children for whom an adoptive placement has not been identified. These efforts include the distribution of written information regarding the child to two or more adoption agencies, review of the case file for relatives or individuals in the child's past who may be able and willing to provide a permanent home for the child and exploration with the child to identify individuals with whom the child is familiar who may be able and willing to adopt the child.

A child will only be placed into an adoptive home which meets the child's best interests and special needs. This placement will be based on, but not limited to, the placement of siblings together, the information contained in the child study inventory, the child's case plan, the adoptive family home study, and the JFS 01689 "Documentation of the Placement Decision-Making Process." If only one relative or the child's current substitute caregiver has expressed an interest in adopting the child and the agency deems that placement with that person is in the child's best interest, the agency shall give preference to this family in the placement selection and the agency is not required to consider other families in the matching conference.

If the child is a member of a federally recognized tribe or Alaskan Native Village, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901 (1/2/06) (ICWA) shall take precedence for an adoption.

Preference for keeping siblings together whenever possible and in their best interest is a placement consideration.

A child's preference may be considered when the child has the capacity to express his or her preference.

Length of time between adoptive placements is a consideration in placement decisions.

In accordance with OAC 5101:2-48-16, RCCS gives consideration, regardless of geographic location, to the following:

- All adult relatives of the child. This includes a relative or non-relative who the birth mother has indicated by name as a potential resource to adopt her child.
 - The identified relative or non-relative shall have, at a minimum, a signed JFS 01691 "Application for Child Placement" or other signed adoption application on file with another state at least five working days prior to the matching conference.
 - The identified relative or non-relative shall meet all relevant state child protection standards unless the PCSA or PCPA determines that the placement is not in the best interest of the child.
- The child's substitute caregiver who is approved to adopt or who has completed the JFS 01692 "Application for Adoption of a Foster Child or Sibling Group" at least five working days prior to the matching conference unless the agency determines that the placement is not in the best interest of the child.
- Other suitable approved prospective adoptive families.

A prospective applicant can request a state hearing if they believe an adoptive placement was denied, or will be denied, solely for the reason of geographic location.

In selecting a placement for a given child, RCCS will consider all approved families equally. The Agency imposes no geographic restrictions in regard to matching or placement decisions. The child

will be placed in an appropriate adoptive home that meets the child's best interests and special needs as soon as the child and adoptive parents are ready for placement. Adoptive parents must wait for six months after an adoption finalization before accepting another child into their home as an adoptive placement.

If making a placement outside of Richland County, the worker will notify the local public children services agency in writing of the impending adoptive placement no later than ten days prior to the placement of the child in the adoptive home. This written notification will be maintained in the adoptive family's file.

Procedure for selecting approved adoptive families for matching conference

The Agency maintains a spreadsheet of all approved adoptive families. Twice per year, the Agency sends a letter to adoptive families requesting to update their information. Adoptive families are required to return the updated information, so that the Agency can ensure that all large family assessments are completed and all child characteristics and capacity are current. The family is also asked if they wish to be considered in adoption matching meetings. The adoption worker, foster care worker and Placement Supervisor review the spreadsheet prior to the matching meeting and select all approved adoptive families whose child characteristics match the characteristics of the child being presented and who have requested to be included in the matching meetings. If more than five families are identified the number of families is narrowed to five by determining the level of experience the family has in working with child(ren) with the specific behavior, medical or mental health challenges that a specific child presents and the preference to keep siblings together if in the child's best interest. If a family was previously considered for a child in a matching conference and was not interested in the child, the Agency is not required to consider the family for the same child in subsequent matching conferences.

Section B TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

All prospective adoptive families must attend 36 hours of Pre-service training. Richland County Children Services provides pre-service training under the following twelve major topic areas: orientation and overview, teambuilding, abuse and neglect and the impact on child development, attachment and separation, discipline, preventing and de-escalating crisis, cultural issues in placement, working with primary families, effects of care giving on the family, sexual abuse, permanency issues for children, and permanency issues for families.

Section C SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER ADOPTION

Pursuant to 5101:2-5-13 (A)(7), the Agency will provide notification to the recommending agency (if other than the custody holding agency) and to the substitute caregiver, of the adoption process should a child placed with the substitute caregiver become available for adoption.

The Agency will conduct a search of the Central Registry for out of state searches and the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System for searches within Ohio when placing a child in an adoptive placement. This search will be completed to determine if there have been any abuse or neglect allegations made against the applicant, or any other adult residing in the home of the applicant. This search will cover all counties in the State of Ohio.

The Agency will assist the substitute care giver in completing the JFS 01691 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Application for Child Placement.

1. The Agency will compile and review the following information to determine the appropriateness of the substitute care giver for adoptive placement:
 - A. JFS 01653 Medical statement for Substitute Care/Adoptive Applicant and all household members;
 - B. JFS 01349 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Family Foster Home - Study or the JFS 01673 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Assessment for Child Placement (Home study) as applicable;
 - C. All JFS 01385 forms, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Assessment for Child Placement Update, if applicable;
 - D. Foster home record;
 - E. FBI and BCI criminal record check;
 - F. Case record information documented by the placement worker's visits to the foster home.

2. An Adoption Assessor will:
 - A. Review information contained on the JFS 01691 Application for Child Placement;
 - B. Conduct home visits;
 - C. Observe the interaction between the child, substitute caregiver and other members of the household, if applicable;
 - D. Discuss how the substitute care giver has been working with the child on problems which were identified in the case plan and how they will deal with long term issues the child may have; and
 - E. Discuss the availability of adoption assistance and post-finalization adoption services with the substitute caregiver.

3. Based upon information obtained through review of documentation outlined in the above paragraphs the adoption assessor will complete the portions of the home study that were not previously completed on the family substitute care home study and attach the most recent Assessment for Child Placement Update.

In accordance with OAC 5101:2-48-11.1 a substitute care giver, who has a foster child in his or her home for at least 6 consecutive months and expresses the desire to adopt, however, is not approved as an adoptive parent can complete the JFS Form 01692 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Application for Adoption of a Foster Child. A completed Application for Adoption of a Foster Child with supporting documentation, will serve as a shortened home study, replacing the JFS 01673 Assessment for Child Placement.

A child's time in the substitute care giver's home prior to the adoptive placement will count toward the supervisory time required prior to finalization.

Prospective adoptive parents who are applying for simultaneous approval for adoptive placement and certification as a family foster home must be at least 21 years of age. Applicants who wish to adopt only must be 18 years old.

Section D THE JOINT FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION APPLICATION & HOMESTUDY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

RCCS offers a joint home study. The home study will be a joint decision-making assessment and process involving the applicant and the Agency. The Agency will conduct a search of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System when completing a joint foster care/adoption application and home study assessment. This search will be completed to determine if there have been any abuse or neglect allegations made against the applicant, or any other adult residing in the home of the applicant. This search will cover all counties in the State of Ohio.

Section E REVIEW OF PROCEDURES: APPLICATION, HOME STUDY & UPDATE

Falsification Procedure:

Richland County Children Services (RCCS), hereafter referred to as the Agency, is committed to compliance with 5101:2-33-13 of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC).

If the Agency working with the family suspects that a false statement or false document was knowingly made or submitted during the home study process or after the home study was approved, the worker shall report the information to the Agency Executive Director or designee within three days of the initial determination of possible falsification. The written statement shall include, but is not limited to:

- The original document completed by the applicant, or written documentation of the false statement provided by the applicant or adoptive parent.
- Documentation verifying the information or document is knowingly false.

If there is a child placed in the home whose adoption has not yet been finalized, the Agency shall, within twenty-four hours of the Executive Director or designee receiving the written statement mentioned in paragraph (A) of this rule, determine if there is probable cause related to the adoptive child's safety and well-being to warrant the removal of the child from the home until the investigation is completed.

If the Agency conducting the investigation is not the agency with custody of the child, the Agency shall notify the custodial agency within twenty-four hours of administrator or designee receiving the written statement mentioned in paragraph (A) of this rule of the concerns related to the falsification.

Within ten days of the Executive Director or designee receiving the written statement described in paragraph (A) of this rule, the Agency shall send a notification letter to the adoptive applicant or approved adoptive family, via certified mail, indicating that the information submitted to the Agency has been determined to be knowingly false. The notice shall include the following:

- Date the notice was mailed.
- A copy of the documentation alleged to be knowingly falsified, as well as a written explanation of the falsification.

- A statement that the Agency is required to notify the county prosecutor in cases in which it has been determined the applicant or family made knowingly false statements, pursuant to section 2921.13 of the Revised Code.
- A statement indicating the home study process will discontinue because the Agency has probable cause to believe a false statement or document was knowingly provided.

If the home study process has already been completed, then the Agency shall include a statement that includes the following:

- The Agency will not present the family at a matching conference, pursuant to rule 5101:2-48-16 of the Administrative Code if it is determined a false statement or document was knowingly provided.
- The Agency will not release a home study for sharing or transferring, pursuant to rule 5101:2-48-19 of the Administrative Code if it is determined a false statement or document was knowingly provided.
- A home study will not be filed with the court for finalization purposes pursuant to section 3107.031 of the Revised Code if it is determined a false statement or document was knowingly provided.
- A statement that the adoptive applicant or adoptive parent has the right to respond to the allegation of falsification.
- A statement that the adoptive applicant or adoptive parent has ten days from the date they receive the notification letter to respond to the Agency with documentation that the allegation is unfounded and that the statements or documents were not knowingly falsified.

If the adoptive home study is in the process, a statement that if the applicant fails to respond to the Agency within ten days of the receipt of the notification letter then the application to adopt is considered withdrawn and the refusal to respond to the allegation has resulted in the termination of the home study process by voluntary withdrawal.

If the adoptive home study has been approved, a statement that if the adoptive parent fails to respond to the Agency within ten days of the receipt of the notification letter then the refusal to respond to the allegation will result in the expiration of the adoption home study approval at the end of the current approval span.

If the applicant or adoptive parent fails to respond to the Agency within ten days of the date of receipt pursuant to paragraph (D) of this rule, the Agency shall close the adoption home study as if the adoptive applicant or adoptive parent has voluntarily withdrawn from the home study process.

If the applicant or adoptive family responds within the ten-day timeframe with the documentation required in paragraph (D)(7) of this rule, then the Agency shall conduct an internal investigation that includes the following:

- A review of the information received from the adoptive applicant or family.
- A face to face visit with the adoptive applicant(s) or adoptive family.
- An interview with any other relevant witnesses, if applicable.

The final investigative report shall be completed and mailed to the adoptive applicant no later than thirty days after the receipt of the adoptive applicant's or adoptive family's response to the allegation.

If unanticipated circumstances require additional time to complete the investigation or issue the report, the Agency shall notify the applicant or adoptive family of the need for more time and that an extension of an additional fourteen days is needed.

The extension shall be documented in the adoptive family's record.

The investigative report shall include the following:

- An explanation of the allegation.
- Any background information deemed relevant by the Agency.
- The results of the investigation, including whether probable cause was found to indicate the applicant or adoptive parent made knowingly false statements.
- Any action steps to be taken by the applicant, adoptive parent, or the Agency as a result of the investigation.

If the final investigative report concludes that the information or documentation was knowingly falsified, the Agency shall do the following:

- Forward a copy of the investigative report to the county prosecutor's office where the adoptive applicant or adoptive parent lives.

If the adoptive applicant was still in the home study process, the Agency shall close the adoption home study as if the applicant has voluntarily withdrawn from the home study process.

If the adoptive home study was approved prior to the investigation of falsification, then the following limitations are in place:

- The adoption home study shall not be presented at any matching conference, pursuant to rule 5101:2-48-16 of the Administrative Code.
- The adoption home study shall not be released to another agency for sharing or transferring purposes, pursuant to rule 5101:2-48-19 of the Administrative Code.
- The adoption home study shall not be filed with the court for finalization purposes pursuant to section 3107.031 of the Revised Code.
- The adoption home study approval shall expire at the end of the current approval span.

If the final investigative report concludes that there was no falsification made by the applicant, the agency shall:

- Resume the home study process if the applicant chooses to proceed.
- Complete the home study within one hundred eighty days from the date the investigative report was completed.

Any documentation resulting from the requirements of this rule shall be maintained in the record of the adoptive applicant or adoptive parent.

Application:

When an adoptive applicant contacts the Agency to inquire about adoption, he or she will receive a packet of information which includes a copy of the Adoption Policy and Ohio Adoption Guide and all required information pursuant to OAC 5101:2-48-08 within seven working days. Applicants who are not residents of Richland County will be referred to another agency for adoption services.

Once an application for adoption is received by the agency it will either be accepted or denied. The Agency will not accept an application for approval for adoptive placement which does not contain complete and accurate information.

If the application is denied, the Agency shall notify the family as to why their application was rejected. The Notice shall explain the procedures to have the application reviewed by the Agency if the family disagrees with the rejection.

If the application is accepted, the prospective adoptive family will be required to provide the Agency with the following:

1. A copy of the marriage certificate;
2. A copy of any divorce decrees;
3. Adoptive applicant's financial statement;
4. A medical statement for adoptive applicants and all members of the household, signed by a licensed Physician;
5. Authorization for Release of information to check law enforcement record, BCI/FBI fingerprint checks for applicant and other adult household members;
6. References;
7. Mandatory home visits including, individual interviews with a case worker;
8. Autobiographies by each prospective adoptive parent;
9. Proof of Ohio residency for the past 5 years; i.e., tax records, bank records, rent or mortgage payment receipts;
10. Safety Audit of the household where prospective adoptive parent(s) reside;
11. Proof of income for the household for the most recent tax year prior to the date of application;
12. Proof of income for the household for the two most recent months prior to the date of application;
13. At least one utility bill for each utility the household utilizes. The bill or bills shall not be older than the date of application.

The Agency will conduct a home study for all complete applications submitted and accepted. The Home Study will be completed within 180 days of the date the completed application was submitted. The Agency will notify the applicant in writing as to whether the home study was approved or

denied within ten days after the home study is completed. If the home study was denied, the written notice shall include a detailed explanation of the reason for the denial, as well as an explanation of the applicants right to an Agency review.

When an applicant seeking to adopt a minor or foster child has at least five children residing in their home, after the minor or foster child to be adopted is placed, an assessor shall complete the JFS 01530 “Multiple Children/Large Family Assessment” form.

In rare circumstances, in which the relative wishes to adopt a child and lives out of the county, the Agency may choose to initiate a home study instead of referring the relative to their county of residence. In such circumstances the Agency will notify the public children services agency in the relative’s county of residence within ten days of initiating the home study. Additionally, the Agency will notify the public children services agency in the relative’s county of residence of any impending adoptive placement no later than ten days prior to the placement of the child in the adoptive home.

When the Agency is notified by another child placing agency that it has initiated a home study of a relative in Richland County, or intends to place a child in the home of the relative, RCCS will provide the other child placing agency the following relevant information:

- Past or present functioning of the prospective adoptive parent;
- Rule violations involving foster and pre-adoptive child;
- Third party investigations;
- Information relating to previous adoption applications; and/or
- Previous disruptions from the prospective adoptive family home.

RCCS will release all information except references and background checks to the requesting agency within 15 days of receipt of a request and an authorization for release, when the family is seeking a child from another agency. The Agency will release all information contained in the adoption home study to the designated agency within fifteen days after a request has been made and authorization for release has been signed by the adoptive family. The Agency will release home studies to an agency that requests them if the adoptive families have signed an authorization for release of information. The worker will document in their SACWIS notes that they have mailed the home study to the designated agency within fifteen days. These SACWIS notes will be printed and placed in the adoptive family’s record. RCCS does not have any fees associated with the release of the adoptive home study. RCCS will not release any home study when it has been determined that the application or home study contains a false statement.

RCCS will maintain approved home studies received from other agencies in the secure file room or locked file cabinet in the same manner that Agency approved home studies are maintained. All expired home studies will be destroyed.

Criminal Records Checks:

FBI criminal records checks are required for all substitute care/adoptive applicants. RCCS is responsible for arranging, processing and payment for all criminal records checks. Prospective adoptive parents convicted of any offense listed in OAC 5101:2-48-10 (C) may not be considered for adoptive placement unless they are determined to have “rehabilitated” as set forth in said rule.

Criminal records checks conducted by FBI are not public records.

RCCS will not proceed with the application process, adoptive home study or approval for adoptive placement for any persons convicted of any of the following offenses:

1. Any Sex Offense
2. Endangering Children
3. Corrupting another with drugs
4. Trafficking in drugs
5. An offense of violence
6. Any felony offense

Adoptive applicant(s) or approved adoptive parent(s) must notify the Agency in writing if a person residing in the home who is twelve years old, but under eighteen years old, has been convicted or pleaded guilty to any offense listed in Appendix A of rule 5101:2-48-10 of the Administrative Code or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult, would constitute one of those offenses.

Home Study Update:

The expiration date of an initial home study is two (2) years from the date of the initial approval of the applicant as adoptive parent. An adoptive home study will be updated if it is not current within two years of the initial approval. In the update, it is required that the prospective adoptive family complete a financial statement, provide medical statements, and have a police check and a home visit by the case worker. Financial statements and/or medical updates may be requested at the time of the update. Once a home study has been updated, the expiration date is calculated from the date of the approval of the update, not to exceed two years from the date of the initial approval.

If an applicant fails to submit all required documentation within one year of the adoption application, the home study process will be terminated.

Adoption Review Procedures:

All adoptive applicants, prospective adoptive families and adoptive families have a right to express concerns and request a review of the denial of their adoptive home study, as follows:

- If the applicant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Agency concerning the applicant's home study, matching process with children and families or other services provided such as pre-finalization services, the applicant may submit a request for a review with the Agency.

The Agency review concerning adoptive home studies and/or matching decisions is as follows:

- Discuss the problem with the adoption case worker. If this does not lend itself to a resolution, then another conference should be requested with the Placement Supervisor.

The Agency review will occur within thirty days of the receipt of the request for an agency review and will include a face to face meeting with the person seeking the review, caseworker and Placement Supervisor or designee.

A written decision, including the reason for the decision will be rendered by the Executive Director or designee. The decision will be based upon the evidence presented at the review. A copy of the decision will be provided to all parties to the Agency review within fifteen days of the review.

All documentation related to notification regarding rights to an agency review and written decisions of the Agency will be maintained in the child and family case record.

If a resolution still does not occur the Agency will provide the family with notices and copies of all materials related to requesting a state hearing. This is in accordance with OAC 5101:2-48-24.

For complaints involving alleged discriminatory acts, policies, or practices pertaining to the substitute care and adoption process that involve race, color or national origin, the procedures contained in rule 5101:2-33-03 of the Administrative Code supersede the requirements of this procedure.

If a family believes that an adoptive placement was denied or will be denied solely for the reasons of geographic location of the family, the Agency will provide written notification of the availability of a state hearing to the family within fifteen days of the receipt of the complaint.

Section F PROVISION OF SERVICES

Pre-Finalization

When a child is placed in an adoptive home, the adoptive family must cooperate with the Agency to complete any paperwork required by Agency policy and/or state law. A copy of the child's life book will be given to the adoptive parents. A written description of the types of behaviors the prospective adoptive parents may anticipate from children who have experienced abuse and neglect, suggested interventions, and post adoption services that are available will be given to the prospective adoptive parents. A copy of the Social and Medical History form JFS 1616 and Child Study Inventory will be given to the adoptive parents prior to the date of adoptive placement. All materials and procedures associated with Adoption Subsidy determination.

At a minimum, one face-to-face visit with the child and adoptive parent(s) in the adoptive home shall be made during the first seven days of the placement. This does not include the date of placement.

At a minimum, one face-to-face visit with the child and adoptive parent(s) in the adoptive home shall be made during the first thirty days of placement. This does not include the visit during the first seven days of placement.

After the first thirty days, at least one face-to-face visit with the child and adoptive parent(s) in the adoptive home shall be made monthly.

The following services will be provided to the adoptive parent(s) through the Agency:

- 1) Case Management

- 2) Referrals to Community Resources
- 3) Casework Counseling
- 4) Educational Programs
- 5) Crisis Services

Post Finalization

RCCS will provide post-finalization services to adoptive families who request the service. There is not currently a program of post-finalization services. Services are provided upon request only. These services will include case management and information and referral. More intensive case management services will be offered if there is risk of disruption.

The Agency will refer families to appropriate community resources that can assist them. The Agency will also provide regular educational programming on adoption issues offered by the Central Ohio Regional Training Center. The Adoption/Foster Parent Association of Richland County meets monthly at the Agency on the last Monday of each month. The meeting offers educational opportunities and a supportive environment.

Available Adoption Subsidy Programs

The purpose of the Adoption Subsidy Programs is to assist Adoptive families financially in order to make permanent homes possible for children with special needs who are in the permanent custody of public children services or private child placing agencies. A child must be determined to be a “special needs child” to qualify for these programs. Subsidy amounts and types will vary from child to child depending on the needs of the child. Regardless of the program, all applications are available through the Agency. In addition, The Ohio Adoption Subsidy Guide is available upon request through the Agency and is provided to all individuals prior to adoptive placement.

Federal Adoption Subsidy Programs

Federal Title IV-E Adoption Assistance: Children who are deemed eligible qualify for a monthly subsidy to assist their adoptive parents in caring for their special needs. The subsidy is negotiated between the Agency and the adoptive family. If Richland County Children Services was not the agency that facilitated the adoption, the agency involved with the adoptive family can apply for the subsidy on their behalf to determine if the child is eligible.

Reimbursement of Non-Recurring Expenses: This program is available to assist adoptive families who are adopting a special needs child(ren) with certain expenses, such as legal expenses, travel, lodging, food, supervision of the placement, adoption study, psychological exams, and reasonable and necessary adoption fees. This is a one-time reimbursement for each child up to an amount specified by ODJFS. All applications must be submitted and approved prior to the finalization. Families must submit all receipts within two years of the finalization in order to be reimbursed. Families who adopt internationally are not eligible for the reimbursement of non-recurring expenses.

Adoption Assistance Procedure

Purpose:

The purpose of the Adoption Subsidy Program in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-49-05, is to assist adoptive families financially in order to make a permanent home possible for children which special needs and in the permanent custody of the Agency. The monthly amount of the subsidy payment is determined by negotiation and mutual agreement between the adoptive parent(s) and the Agency. Subsidy amounts will vary from child to child based on the needs of the child. A packet of information including the subsidy worksheet, Financial Statement and Ohio Adoption Subsidy Guide will be made available to the adoptive parents from the Clinical Director at or after the child is matched with the family. Once the adoption subsidy worksheet and financial statement is returned, the Clinical Director will convene the Adoption Subsidy Committee. The Adoption Subsidy Committee consists of the Assistant Director, Director of Finance and Clinical Director who will discuss and then send a response to the adoptive parents via email for their consideration as part of the negotiation process.

The information conveyed to the adoptive parents from the committee will contain what was and was not approved on the worksheet. The family will be advised of a need to reply as follows:

- If the family agrees with the subsidy amount, the family will note this in an email or in writing to the Clinical Director.
- If the family does not agree with the subsidy amount, the family will respond in writing with their counterproposal.
- The family can request at any time, within the negotiation process, to meet with the Committee and negotiate the subsidy amount. The expectation is the subsidy amount is set within 30 days of the matching meeting.
- If the family and committee cannot reach a subsidy agreement, the adoptive family can request a state hearing through the process outlined in the Ohio Adoption Subsidy Guide.
- Once the subsidy amount is agreed, the caseworker will begin all finalization paperwork.

After finalization, the family will be notified by the finance department for any changes to their family demographics such as name or address changes. The family may also request an amendment to their subsidy amount which would set in motion the aforementioned subsidy negotiation process.

State Adoption Subsidy Programs

State Maintenance Subsidy: This subsidy is available for those children who do not qualify for the Federal Title IV-E Adoption Assistance program. The subsidy is to assist in the support of the adoptive child after finalization; however, this program is based on the adoptive parent's income. Applications are available through the Agency and must be applied for prior to finalization.

If an Ohio private child placing agency (PCPA) holds permanent custody of the child, application by the adoptive parent shall be made to the public children services agency (PCSA) in the county in which the PCPA is located. The adoptive parents must provide the PCSA with a copy of the ODJFS 01616 "Social and Medical History" completed on the child for whom the subsidy is being requested and a copy of the adoptive parents' completed ODJFS 01673 "Assessment for Child Placement" (home study).

Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS): PASSS is a program available to all adoptive parents with a special needs child. The program is designed to assist families in crisis with special

services needed to maintain the adoption. Families can obtain an application from RCCS and can apply throughout the year. Each child may be eligible for up to a yearly amount specified by ODJFS if approved by the Agency Committee and Executive Director, provided funding is available. PASSS is not available to step-parents who have adopted.

State Adoption Assistance Loan Fund: This is a planned program not yet in effect. A prospective adoptive parent may apply to the ODJFS for a loan from the State Adoption Assistance Loan Fund created under Section 5101.143 of the Ohio Revised Code. For the most current information please contact the agency.

Termination of Adoption Assistance

Adoption assistance shall be terminated when:

- A child turns 18 years of age or 21 if the child has a mental or physically disabling condition verified by a Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) or SSI determination;
- A child is no longer receiving support from the adoptive parent;
- The parent is no longer legally responsible for supporting the child due to emancipation of the child;
- The adoptive parents' rights have been terminated or the adoptive parent has voluntarily surrendered parental rights;
- The adoptive parent requests termination of adoption assistance;
- The adoption disrupts prior to finalization; and/or
- The adoptive parent or child dies.

Open Adoptions

RCCS will assist birth parents and adoptive parents in facilitating an open adoption if all parties involved agree and the following applies;

- The contact is beneficial to the child's adoptive and birth family's wellbeing,
- It is appropriate given the strength of the family ties,
- Agreement to the plan for continued contact is reached prior to the time contact occurs,
- The child and both sets of parents and other relatives are supported in the development of relationships and in dealing with potential problems that may arise.

Responding to a request to verify when an adult who consents to be adopted was in the Agency's custody on the date of their eighteenth birthday

The Program Manager or designee will respond to all requests to verify when an adult who consents to be adopted was in the Agency's custody on the date of their eighteenth birthday. The Program Manager or designee will verify in SACWIS that the adult was in the Agency's custody. A written verification will be forwarded once a signed release of information is received. If the request is for completion of the FASFA form for financial aid, the FASFA letter will be generated in SACWIS and forwarded once a signed Release of Information is obtained from the individual.

Procedure for complaints of alleged discriminatory acts, policies or practices in the substitute care or adoption process that involve race, color or national origin pursuant to rule 5101: 2-33-03

Any individual may file a complaint alleging a discriminatory act, policy or practice involving race, color, or national origin in the substitute care or adoption process. Any person, including but not limited to, an employee or former employee of the Agency or a member of a family which has sought to become a substitute caregiver or adoptive parent, may also file a complaint alleging that he or she was intimidated, threatened, coerced, discriminated against or otherwise retaliated against in some way by the Agency or by ODJFS because he or she has made a complaint, testified, assisted, participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing in connection with an allegation that the Agency or ODJFS engaged in discriminatory acts, policies or practices as it applies in the substitute care or adoption process.

The individual filing the complaint must use the JFS 02333 “Discrimination Complaint Form”. The complaint must be filed within two years from the date of the occurrence of the alleged discriminatory act; or two years from the date upon which the complainant learned or should have known of a discriminatory act, policy, or practice. The complaint may be filed with the Agency, any public child welfare agency, any private substitute care and adoption agency or with ODJFS. An individual may also file a complaint with the United States Department of Health and Human Services or Office for Civil Rights.

The Agency will forward the complaint to ODJFS within three working days of date of receipt of the complaint. The Agency will not initiate, conduct or run concurrent investigations surrounding the complaint or take any further action regarding the complainant or the subject of the complaint until the issuance of the final investigation report by ODJFS, unless otherwise approved by ODJFS.

The Agency will fully cooperate with ODJFS during the course of the investigation and will submit any information requested by ODJFS within fourteen days from the date of the request, unless otherwise agreed upon.

No person who has filed a complaint alleging a discriminatory act, policy or practice involving race, color or national origin in the substitute care or adoption process of the Agency or who has testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in the investigation or a complaint will be intimidated, threatened, coerced or retaliated against by any employee or contractor of the Agency.

The Agency will provide a copy of this policy along with the JFS 02333 “Discrimination Complaint Form”, JFS 1611 “Non-Discrimination Requirements for Foster Care and Adoptive Placements” and “Standards of Conduct” to all substitute caregivers certified or in the process of certification and to all individuals who have approved adoptive home studies or who are participating in the adoptive home study process within thirty days of the effective date of OAC 5101:2-33-03. All individuals inquiring about or applying to be a substitute caregiver or adoptive parent will receive a copy of this policy along with the JFS 02333 “Discrimination Complaint Form”, JFS 1611 “Non-Discrimination Requirements for Foster Care and Adoptive Placements” and “Standards of Conduct” within seven days of their initial contact with the Agency.

Non-discrimination Requirements for Foster Care and Adoptive Placements

The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, 42 U.S.C. 622(b) (9), 671(a) (18), 674(d) and 1996(b) (hereinafter "MEPA") and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et. seq. as it applies to the substitute care and adoption process (hereinafter "Title VI"), are designed to decrease the time children wait for substitute care and adoption placement, prevent discrimination in the placement of children, and aid in the identification and recruitment of foster and adoptive families who can meet each child's needs. It prohibits any agency using federal funds from denying any person the opportunity to become an adoptive parent or substitute caregiver on the basis of race, color or national origin of that person, or of the child involved and from delaying or denying the placement of a child for adoption or substitute care on the basis of race, color or national origin of the adoptive parent or parents, of the substitute caregiver or caregivers, or the child involved.

Under MEPA and Title VI, no agency may routinely consider race, color or national origin as a factor in assessing the needs or best interests of children. In each case, the only consideration shall be the child's individual needs and the ability of the prospective substitute caregiver or adoptive parent to meet those needs. Only the most compelling reasons may serve to justify consideration of race, color or national origin as part of a placement decision. Such reasons emerge only in the unique and individual circumstances of each child and each prospective substitute caregiver or adoptive parent. In those exceptional circumstances when race, color or national origin need to be taken into account in a placement decision, such consideration must be narrowly tailored to advance the child's best interest. Even when the facts of a particular case allow consideration related to race, color or national origin, this consideration shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision.

The following actions by a PCSA, PCPA, or PNA are permitted under MEPA and Title VI:

- Asking about and honoring any choice made by prospective adoptive parents or prospective substitute caregivers regarding what race, color or national origin of child the prospective adoptive parents or prospective substitute caregivers will accept;
- Honoring the decision of a child over 12 years of age to not consent to an adoption when that decision has been approved by a court pursuant to section 3107.06 of the Revised Code;
- Providing information and resources about adopting a child of another race, color or national origin to prospective adoptive parents or prospective substitute caregivers who request such information and making known to all families that such information and resource are available;
- Considering the request of a birth parent(s) to place the child with a relative or nonrelative identified by name;
- Considering race, color or national origin as a possible factor in the placement decision when compelling reasons serve to justify that race, color or national origin needs to be a factor in the placement decision. Even when the facts of a particular case allow consideration related to race, color or national origin, this consideration shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision;

- Discussing the special cultural and physical needs of children of different races, ethnicities, and national origins as part of the training which is required of all persons who seek to become eligible to be adoptive parents or substitute caregivers;
- Documenting verbal comments, verbatim, or documenting in detail any other indication made by a prospective adoptive family member or prospective substitute caregiver family member living in the household reflecting a negative perspective regarding the race, color or national origin of a child for whom they have expressed an interest in adopting and indicating whether those comments were made before or after completion of the cultural diversity training which is required for all prospective adoptive or substitute care applicants.

The following are examples of actions prohibited under MEPA and Title VI:

- Using the race, color or national origin of a prospective adoptive parent or substitute caregiver to differentiate between adoptive placements for a child, unless an individualized assessment has been completed;
- Honoring the request of a birth parent(s) to place a child with a prospective adoptive parent or prospective substitute caregiver of a specific race, color or national origin, unless the birth parent(s) identifies a relative or non-relative by name and that person is found to meet all relevant state child welfare protection standards, unless the agency determines that the placement is not in the best interests of the child;
- Requiring a prospective adoptive family or a prospective substitute caregiver to prepare or accept a transracial adoption or substitute care plan;
- Using "culture" or "ethnicity" as a proxy for race, color or national origin;
- Delaying or denying placement of a child based upon the geographical location of the neighborhood of the prospective adoptive family or a prospective substitute caregiver whenever geography is being used as a proxy for the racial composition of the neighborhood, the demographics of the neighborhood, the presence or lack of presence of a significant number of persons of a particular race, color, or national origin in the neighborhood or any similar purpose;
- Requiring extra scrutiny, additional training, or greater cultural awareness of individuals who are prospective adoptive parents or substitute caregivers of children of a different race, color or national origin than required of other prospective adoptive parents or substitute caregivers;
- Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the needs of children of a particular race, color or national origin;
- Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the ability of prospective adoptive parents or prospective substitute caregivers of a particular race, color or national origin to care for or nurture the sense of identity of a child of another race, color or national origin;
- "Steering" prospective adoptive parents or substitute caregivers away from parenting a child of another race, color, or national origin. "Steering" is any activity that attempts to discourage prospective adoptive parents or prospective substitute caregivers from parenting a child of a particular race, color or national origin.

This form is used in compliance with the Ohio Administrative Code rules 5101:2-48-05 and 5101:2-5-13. JFS 01611 (2/2005)

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT:

Employee and Contractor/Provider Compliance with MEPA and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Effective February 1, 2005

Richland County Children Services has established the following Standards of Conduct with regard to the performance of employees and contractors/providers related to compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9), 671(a)(18), 674(d) and 1996(b) (MEPA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq. (Title VI), as they apply to the foster care and adoption process. These Standards of Conduct prohibit policies, procedures or actions which serve to:

- Deny any person the opportunity to become a substitute caregiver or an adoptive parent on the basis of race, color or national origin of that person, or of the child involved; or
- Delay or deny any placement of a child in substitute care or for adoption on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the substitute caregiver(s), of the adoptive parent(s) or of the child involved.

Permissible Actions:

MEPA and Title VI permit the following actions as they apply to the substitute care or adoption process:

- Asking about and honoring any initial or subsequent choices made by prospective foster or adoptive parents regarding what race, color, or national origin of child the prospective foster or adoptive parents will accept.
- Honoring the decision of a child twelve years of age or older to not consent to an adoption when that decision has been approved by a court pursuant to section 3107.06 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- Providing information and resources about fostering or adopting a child of another race, color or national origin to prospective foster or adoptive parents who request such information and making known to all families that such information and resources are available.
- Considering the request of a birth parent(s) to place the child with a relative or non-relative identified by name.
- Considering the race, color or national origin of the child as a possible factor in the placement decision when compelling reasons serve to justify that race, color or national origin need to be a factor in the placement decision pursuant to 5101:2-48-13 and 5101:2-42-18.1 of the Ohio Administrative Code. These rules permit consideration of race, color or national origin if an Individualized Child Assessment (JFS 01688) completed pursuant to these rules indicates the child has needs related to race, color or national origin that should be taken into account when placing the child. Even when the facts of a particular case allow

consideration related to race, color, or national origin, this consideration shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision.

- Promoting cultural awareness, including awareness of cultural and physical needs that may arise in the care of children of different races, ethnicities, and national origins as part of the training which is required of all applicants who seek to become foster or adoptive parents.
- Documenting verbal comments, verbatim, or describing in detail any other indication made by a prospective foster or adoptive family member living in the household or any other person living in the household reflecting a negative perspective regarding the race, color or national origin of a child for whom the prospective foster or adoptive family has expressed an interest in fostering or adopting. The documentation shall indicate whether those comments were made before or after completion of the cultural diversity training which is required for all foster and adoptive applicants. Documentation shall be included in the family's home study, update, or an addendum to the home study or update prior to consideration of placement or a matching conference. A matching conference is the process of determining the most appropriate adoptive family for the child based on the child's special needs. The matching committee may consider the information in determining if the placement is in the child's best interests.

Prohibited Actions:

MEPA and Title VI prohibit the following actions as they apply to the substitute care or adoption process:

- Using the race, color or national origin of a prospective substitute caregiver or adoptive parent to differentiate between placements.
- Honoring the request of a birth parent(s) to place a child with prospective substitute caregiver or adoptive parent(s) of a specific race, color or national origin, unless the birth parent(s) identifies a relative or non-relative by name and that person is found to meet all relevant state child protection standards, provided that the agency determines that the placement is in the best interests of the child.
- Requiring a prospective adoptive family to prepare or accept a transracial adoption plan.
- Using "culture" or "ethnicity" as a proxy for race, color or national origin.
- Delaying or denying placement of a child based upon the geographical location of the neighborhood of the prospective substitute caregiver or adoptive family whenever geography is being used as a proxy for:
 - the racial or ethnic composition of the neighborhood;
 - the demographics of the neighborhood; or
 - the presence or lack of presence of a significant number of persons of a particular race, color, or national origin in the neighborhood or any similar purpose.
- Requiring extra scrutiny, additional training, or greater cultural awareness of individuals who are prospective foster or adoptive parents of children of a different race, color or national origin than required of other prospective foster or adoptive parents.

- Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the needs of children of a particular race, color or national origin.
- Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the ability of prospective foster or adoptive parents of a particular race, color or national origin to care for or nurture the sense of identity of a child of another race, color, or national origin.
- "Steering" prospective foster or adoptive parents away from parenting a child of another race, color, or national origin. "Steering" is any activity that attempts to discourage prospective foster or adoptive parents from parenting a child of a particular race, color or national origin.
- Requiring an ongoing, foster care or adoption worker or contractor to justify a proposed placement for the reason that the race, color or national origin of the child is different from that of the family whom the worker is proposing as the child's foster caregiver or adoptive parent.

Prohibition on Retaliation:

RCCS employees and contractors/providers may not intimidate, threaten, coerce, discriminate against or otherwise retaliate against any individual who makes a complaint, testifies, assists or participates in any manner in an investigation related to alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in the foster care or adoption process.

Additional Information:

Employees or contractors/providers who desire more information about MEPA and Title VI as related to the adoption and foster care process may contact the RCCS Program Manager at (419) 774-4100 to be directed to the current MEPA Monitor.

MEPA Complaint Procedure:

Any person who believes that RCCS, any other public or private Ohio adoption or substitute care agency, or the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services have policies or procedures that violate MEPA and Title VI may file a complaint. In addition, anyone who believes that he or she was intimidated, threatened, coerced, discriminated against or otherwise retaliated against in some way because he or she made a complaint, testified, assisted or participated in any manner in an investigation related to alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in the substitute care or adoption process may also file a complaint. Individuals who may file a complaint include but are not limited to the following:

- a substitute caregiver or adoptive parent or other member of a substitute care or adoptive family;
- a prospective substitute caregiver or adoptive parent or other family member;
- an employee or former employee of RCCS or of any other Ohio adoption or substitute care agency.

Individuals who wish to file a complaint must complete the “Discrimination Complaint Form” (JFS 02333). This complaint may be filed with any of the following:

- Richland County Children Services
Attn: Current MEPA Monitor
731 Scholl Road
Mansfield, OH 44907
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Bureau of Civil Rights
30 E. Broad Street, 37th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-3414
614-995-9956, toll free 1-866-227-6353
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Chief Counsel, Region V
233 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 700
Chicago, Illinois 60601
312-353-1640
- Any other public or private Ohio substitute care or adoption agency

If the complaint is filed with RCCS' MEPA Monitor or with any other public or private Ohio substitute care or adoption agency, the MEPA Monitor or other public or private agency must forward the complaint within 3 business days to the Bureau of Civil Rights of ODJFS for investigation. ODJFS must complete the investigation within 90 days of receipt of the complaint, unless unusual circumstances prevent it from completing the investigation within that timeframe. ODJFS will provide a copy of the investigation report to the complainant and to the agency that is the subject of the complaint.

Enforcement Requirements:

These standards of conduct include enforcement requirements to be used whenever an agency employee or contractor/provider engages in discriminatory acts, policies, or practices involving race, color, or national origin in the substitute care or adoption process as determined by the Bureau of Civil Rights of ODJFS upon completion of the investigation conducted pursuant to rule 5101:2-33-03 of the Administrative Code.

For RCCS employees, these enforcement requirements shall include employee discipline in accordance with either Sections 10.1 through 10.4 of the Richland County Children Services Personnel Policy Manual. The enforcement includes governing penalties, sanctions, and other disciplinary actions, which could include suspension and/or removal, to be applied in accordance with applicable employment law.

For contractors/providers performing substitute care or adoption services on behalf of RCCS, these enforcement requirements shall include discipline in accordance with the contractor/provider's personnel policy and may include contract termination. Enforcement requirements for contractor/provider subcontractors shall include corrective action in accordance with the contractor/provider's contract with the subcontractor and may include contract termination.

These enforcement requirements are applied in accordance with applicable employment law.

Corrective Action Plan:

RCCS shall provide for the submission of a corrective action plan whenever an investigation conducted by ODJFS, pursuant to rule 5101:2-33-03 of the Administrative Code, results in a finding that an agency employee or contractor/provider engaged in discriminatory acts, policies, or practices. If the finding involves a discriminatory act, policy or practice by a contractor/provider or subcontractor, RCCS shall develop the corrective action plan in collaboration with the contractor/provider or in collaboration with the contractor/provider and subcontractor.

The corrective action plan shall:

- Address how RCCS will prevent future violations by that employee or contractor/provider or subcontractor, and
- Be submitted to ODJFS within thirty days of notification of the findings of the investigation.

RCCS shall provide a copy of these Standards of Conduct to each employee or contractor/provider who is:

- Engaged in the placement of children into substitute care or for adoption, or
- Engaged in the recruitment, assessment, approval, or selection of substitute caregivers or adoptive families.

Employees or contractors/providers shall receive a copy of the written Standards of Conduct no later than March 3, 2005. If these Standards of Conduct are revised, employees and contractors/providers shall receive a copy of the revised Standards of Conduct within 30 days of the completion of any revisions. New employees or contractors/providers shall receive a copy of the written Standards of Conduct within thirty days of their hire date or the effective date of their contract. RCCS and contractors/providers shall ensure that these Standards of Conduct are provided to their employees and subcontractors.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

RCCS staff is committed to providing quality pre-adoptive, adoptive and post-adoptive services to children and families.

SEARCH BY ADOPTEES FOR BIOLOGICAL FAMILY**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this procedure is in accordance with the Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-48-20 regarding the release of non-identifying information in relation to an adoption.

PROCEDURE:

Effective March 20, 2015, adult adoptees may submit an application to the Ohio Department of Health for a copy of their adoption file. The requesting adoptee must be at least 18 years old. The adult lineal descendants (child, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the adoptee) may also submit an application for a copy of an adoption file.

Pursuant to 5101:2-48-20, the following **non-identifying information** can be given to the adoptive parent or adoptive person without obtaining the consent of the birthparents:

- A birth parent's age at the time of the birth parent's child is adopted;
- The medical and genetic history of the birth parents;
- The age, sex and medical and genetic history of an adopted person's birth siblings and extended family members;
- The heritage and ethnic background, educational level, general physical appearance, religion, occupation, and cause of death of the birth parents, birth siblings and extended family members;
- Any information that may be included on the JFS 1616, Social and Medical history;
- Any information that is not deemed as identifying information as defined in rule 5101:2-01 of the Administrative Code.

Subject to a determination made pursuant to division (E) of section 3107.66 of the Revised Code, the Agency shall provide, upon written request, the following non-identifying information to the birth parent of an adopted person eighteen years of age or older, a birth sibling age eighteen or older or a birth family member of a deceased birth parent:

- An adoptive parent's age at the time of adoption;
- An adoptive sibling's age at the time of adoption;
- The heritage, ethnic background, religion, educational level and occupation of the adoptive parent;
- General information known about the well-being of the adoptee before and after the adoption.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

PURPOSE:

To provide information for service recipients about the process for handling of grievances and/or complaints. Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 (A) (6) and 5101:2-33-20 and the Agency will have a means for receiving, reviewing and resolving grievances. In addition, the agency will have a grievance process to resolve differences with a substitute caregiver or applicant relative to the requirements imposed by OAC 5101:2-7 and 5101:2-33- 03 and any other agency policy.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Any person who is a recipient of Agency services may file, as appropriate, a complaint or grievance with the Agency by completing required forms. If you are not sure which one to request, contact your caseworker or the ask for the Grievance Officer. The forms should be completed and filed either by Regular US Mail or personal service at the Agency front desk during regular business hours. Richland County Children Services shall have four classifications of complaints/grievances available to persons it serves.

1. Dispositional Appeal - Grievances may be filed by persons found to be the perpetrator of abuse and/or neglect through a disposition of indicated or substantiated. This grievance (known as a Dispositional Appeal) must be completed and filed with the Agency within 30 days of the date on the notification letter sent to the person(s) named as the perpetrator(s). Only the named perpetrator(s) of child abuse or neglect can appeal a disposition. A parent, legal guardian or custodian may appeal a disposition on behalf of a minor child named as a perpetrator for whom he or she is legally entitled to exercise the rights and responsibilities of parenthood under Ohio Law.
2. General Complaint Grievance - Complaints may be filed by parents, custodians, legal guardians, substitute caregivers, substitute caregiver applicants, kinship care givers, adoptive applicants, adoptive parents and children involved with the Agency. These complaints may only be filed by the person directly involved in the incident or directly affected by a decision of staff of the agency or by a parent, legal guardian, legal custodian or adoptive parent of a minor child involved with the Agency.
3. Complaints regarding discriminatory acts, policies, or practices pertaining to substitute care and/or the adoption process that involve race, color or national origin shall be handled under OAC rule 5101:2-33-03 and not subject to the procedures outlined below. If there is a question about this type of complaint, please contact your caseworker.
4. Complainants who believe an adoptive placement was denied or delayed based solely on the geographic location of the prospective adoptive family have a right to file a complaint with the Agency.

Complaints/grievances are not legal proceedings, but are administrative in nature and therefore Rules of Evidence do not apply.

In preparing for a complaint/grievance process, records of the agency are confidential; however, information that was already or would be normally supplied to the person bringing the complaint/grievance will be made available upon request. A Complainant or Grievant must make requests in writing for Agency documents to the Manager of Legal Services who will review the request and respond to the complainant/grievant as to what information is available for review.