

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE
RESOURCE FAMILY ASSOCIATION**



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**TESTIMONY REGARDING STATUTORY & PROCEDURAL RIGHTS OF FOSTER PARENTS
PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE OCTOBER 4, 2021**

Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association advocates for all those who care about children and their families. We work supportively with foster, adoptive, and kinship families, and with local foster parent associations and agencies who care for the children they serve.

My name is Garry Krentz. I am the former President of the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association and currently assist the board with Statutory, Regulatory, and best practice guidance for Resource Families. We are very grateful for the committee's interest in this important topic. In fact, our organization has some concerns in the current climate/culture of the inclusion of Resource Families as part of the child welfare team. There is a lot good news and some not so good news. I realize that this committee has several different members from the time when there was a huge push in early 2000's to put in place Statute's for practice and procedural rights for Resource Families. With that said I wanted to take an opportunity to do a brief overview of the laws impacting child welfare and the process by which the system operates. In fact, we currently have some of the best Statutes to support Resource Families in the United States but where we run into problems is in the implementation. Note that many of the Statutes that we will be covering came out of the vision from our organization and we did the original Bill drafts to get the process rolling.

Historical look at why there was a push in early 2000 to support the Resource Families correlates with the reason we are here again today and the strong possibility of why we may be slipping back into the same situation. In early 2000's we were getting into a crisis where there were not enough foster homes. In fact the State and National statistics showed that 2/3 of foster families gave up within the first year of being recruited. There was empirical evidence that the main reason for families leaving was the frustration with working in the bureaucracies

that did not validate their role or give them a voice. Families felt that they were not part of a team, just told what to do and not listened to when they had concerns. This created a values conflict within the families as they felt called to help children but, felt like they were voiceless and powerless to help. The answer was a common-sense solution to include the Resource Families by creating Statutes and practices that included them as part of the team and also in effect expand the Resources Parent population.

The first processes was to expand the definition for children in out of home placements. In 2004 the name for out of home placements changed from Foster Parents to Resource Parents. The Resource Parent definition included Foster, Adoptive and Kinship and from that time forward the licensing regulations covered that entire population. Therefore, this means that all of the following procedural rights that we discuss cover all those populations serving the children.

Second and in 2005 two Pennsylvania Bills passed into law that mandated public and private agencies recognize and include the Resource Families. ACT 73 of 2005 Resource Family Care Act and ACT 68 of 2005 Resource Family and Adoption Process Act. On November 16, 2005, Governor Edward G. Rendell signed Act 68 of 2005, known as the Resource Family and Adoption Process Act, into law. The intent of this Act is to insure that Resource Families, interested in becoming an adoptive resource for a child in their care, received fair consideration as a permanent resource. This Act became effective on January 15, 2006. Also Act 73 of 2005, known as the Resource Family Care Act, signed into law by Governor Edward G. Rendell on November 22, 2005.

This Act was intended to acknowledge the value of Resource Families by establishing specific **mandated** responsibilities for agencies in how they collaborate with Resource Families, thereby ensuring productive and respectful treatment. This law was one of the most progressive in the U.S. at the time. Anticipated benefits of improving the working relationship between agencies and Resource Families are an increased retention rate of Resource Families, and an enhanced quality of care to the children they both serve. The Act took effect on January 21, 2006 and for **some** county and private agencies, the provisions of these Acts were already incorporated into their own best practice. For other agencies, the required practice points were assumed to occur, but there were no clear agency protocols in operation. To begin to address this lack of consistency, representatives from the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA), the Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators convened for roundtable discussions. Their initial meetings produced a comprehensive document that recommended guidelines for implementation of best practice measures that would include the legislative mandates. Most of those guidelines were then incorporated at later meetings into a "Model Agreement of Mutual Rights and Responsibilities." A copy of this agreement, approved by DHS and put in a bulletin for agencies to follow, appears as an attachment to this testimony.

MANDATED POLICY AND PROCEDURES NOW IN STATUTE: The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) expects all public and private social service agencies that approve Resource Families to have in place written protocols that document how the agencies ensure the following provisions:

- Notification of scheduled meetings to allow Resource Families to actively participate in the service and permanency planning for the child(ren) in their care;
- Provision of support services consistent with the child(ren)'s permanency plan to assist the resource parents in caring for the child(ren);
- Timely, open and complete responsiveness from the agency when contacted by a resource family regarding their role and their care of the child(ren) placed in their home;
- Provision of information about the child(ren)'s medical, behavioral and familial history as soon as obtained by the agency/provision of information about education, experiential and placement history of the child(ren) within a reasonable amount of time;
- Consultation with the resource family in developing the child(ren)'s permanency plan;
- Consultation with the resource family in the decision to release their address to the child(ren)'s parent, and notification prior to any such release;
- Assistance with the coordination of services to the family, as needed, to help in dealing with the loss of, or separation from, (a) child(ren) in their care, as long as the removal was not due to an immediate threat to the health or safety of the child(ren) by the resource family;
- Provision of all written agency policies or procedures related to resource family roles;
- Provision of appropriate training to enhance the skills and performance of the resource family;
- Provision of information on how to receive services and reach agency personnel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
 - Assurance of confidentiality regarding any abuse allegations made about a resource family household member, as long as such assurance does not compromise the safety of the child;
- Provision of the opportunity for resource parents to be heard regarding agency decisions and practices involving the child(ren) in their care/assurance that the agency will in no way discriminate or retaliate if resource parents make appropriate inquiry about such decisions or practices;
- Inclusion of a resource family, if interested, as an adoption interview candidate for (a) child(ren) whose goal has been changed to adoption, and who has/ have resided in the resource family home for at least six months, as well as an explanation of the criteria for selection, if another family is chosen by the decision-making agency;

- Assurance that the resource family's right to be notified of any court proceedings related to the child(ren) in their care happens as soon as the agency receives the information; agencies should consider assisting resource parents in how to prepare for court, and in becoming more comfortable with court appearances;
- Assurance that the right of the resource family to be heard during any court proceeding related to the child(ren) in their care is preserved and encouraged in a proactive manner; and
- Assurance that no resource parent shall be denied consideration as an adoptive resource solely because the resource parent cannot be accessed as a resource parent in the future.

Agencies were required to amend their policy and procedures to comply with these Acts and must have a standard document that lists out all of these provisions, and that can be provided to prospective resource family applicants for thorough review prior to approval. **A signed copy of the document must be part of the approval process.** Agencies may choose to use an adapted version of the attached model agreement (policy) with its signature page that is attached to this testimony. Having a signed copy of the model agreement in the resource family record assures that agencies are fulfilling the legislative mandate to provide a copy to the resource family, and provides agencies with a signed agreement by the Resource Families that agency expectations are understood.

Further action to support Resource Families Procedural Rights was in the area of court participation with Pennsylvania's Act 76 of 2007 amending The Juvenile Act on Court Participation. The United States Congress wanted courts to ensure that the foster parents, relative caretakers, and pre-adoptive parents actually receive notice and have the **right to be heard**. In order to ensure resource family participation, congress amended the Social Security Act section 438(b) (1), 475(5) (G), 42 U.S.C. -§629g (b) (1), 675(5) (G). Now to be eligible to receive a CIP grant under this section, the highest State court must have a rule that requires state courts to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of any proceeding regarding a child. To ensure that this important change was reflected in State statute, Governor Edward G. Rendell signed Act 76 of 2007 into law on December 18, 2007, amending -§6336.1 (relating to Notice and hearing) of Title 42 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, known as 'The Juvenile Act.' The statute now requires that resource parents be provided the right, rather than the opportunity, to be heard.

Another court related activity was with State specific-Guardian Ad Litem responsibilities (Juvenile Act amended with Act 18 in 2000) The requirements included meeting with the resource family as outlined in item #5.

1. Meet with the child, as soon as possible following appointment pursuant to section 6337 (relating to right to Counsel) and on a regular basis thereafter, in a manner appropriate to the child's age and maturity.
2. On a timely basis, be given access to relevant court and county agency records; reports of examination of the parents or other custodian of the child pursuant to this chapter; and medical, psychological and school records.
3. Participate in all proceedings, including hearings before masters, and administrative hearings and reviews to the degree necessary to adequately represent the child.
4. Conduct such further investigation necessary to ascertain the facts.
5. Interview potential witnesses, including the child's parents, caretakers and foster parents; examine and cross-examine witnesses; and present witnesses and evidence necessary to protect the best interests of the child.
6. At the earliest possible date, be advised by the county agency having legal custody of the child of: (i) Any plan to relocate the child or modify custody or visitation arrangements, including the reasons therefore, prior to the relocation or change in custody or visitation; and (ii) Any proceeding, investigation or hearing under 23 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ch. 63 (relating to child protective services) or this chapter, directly affecting the child.
7. Make specific recommendations to the court relating to the appropriateness and safety of the child's placement and services necessary to address the child's needs and safety.
8. Explain the proceedings to the child, to the extent appropriate given the child's age, mental condition and emotional condition.
9. Advise the court of the child's wishes, to the extent that they can be ascertained, and present to the court whatever evidence exists to support the child's wishes. When appropriate because of the age or mental and emotional condition of the child, determine, to the fullest extent possible, the wishes of the child and communicate this information to the court. A difference between the child's wishes under this paragraph and the recommendations under paragraph (7) shall not be considered a conflict of interest for the guardian ad litem.

One of the main areas of concerns for our organization is the lack of due process for appealing removal of Child from their home and also disapproval as a Resource Parent when **Procedural Rights** under the current 3700 regulations are not followed. Resource parents have no legal standing in court but do have rights and responsibilities under certain laws and regulations in Pennsylvania as pointed out in this testimony. Under the 3700 regulations a Resource Parent has the right to appeal when they feel that the removal of the child is not in the child's best interest and also when they are disapproved as a resource home. Note with child removal none of the following conditions apply: The foster child has been in your home less than six months. The child is being placed in an adoptive home. The child is being returned to his/her birth

parents. The child is being removed due to a report of alleged abuse against the foster parent(s) or when **the court has ordered the child's removal**. This last item has become an item that has been very negative because the Procedural Rights under the 3700 regulations get wiped away simply by an agency requesting a hearing for the removal of a child as stated in this last item. Therefore if an agencies position is that they want to move a child/youth and the resource parent thinks it's not in the best interest and would want to appeal. That Procedural Right of appealing goes away by simply getting a court order for the removal. Actual Regulations language is below.

§ 3700.73. Foster parent appeal of child relocation.

(a) Foster parents may appeal the relocation of a child from the foster family except under one of the following conditions:

(1) The child has been with the foster family less than 6 months.

(2) The removal is initiated by the court.

(3) The removal is to return the child to his parents.

(4) The removal is to place the child for adoption.

(5) An investigation of a report of alleged child abuse indicates the need for protective custody removal to protect the child from further serious physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or serious physical neglect as defined in Chapter 3490 (relating to protective services).

(b) The FFCA shall inform foster parents in writing that they may appeal the relocation of a child in accordance with subsection (a) at least 15 days prior to the relocation of the child.

(c) Foster parents who wish to appeal the relocation of a child shall submit to the FFCA a written appeal to be postmarked no later than 15 days after the date of the notice of their right to appeal the child's relocation.

(d) Upon receipt of the foster parent's appeal, the FFCA shall date stamp the appeal and submit it to the Department's Office of Hearings and Appeals, Post Office Box 2675, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105, within 5 working days.

(e) If a foster parent submits an appeal in accordance with subsection (c) and the foster parent has the right to appeal in accordance with subsection (a), the child shall remain in the foster family home pending a decision on the appeal.

(f) Parties to an appeal of a child's relocation may be represented by an attorney or other representative.

§ 3700.72. Foster family approval appeals.

(a) The FFCA shall give written notice to each applicant of its decision to approve, disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family. The written notice shall inform the foster parents that they may appeal the FFCA's decision to disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family.

(b) Foster parents who wish to appeal an FFCA decision to disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family shall submit to the FFCA a written appeal. The appeals are subject to 2 Pa.C.S. § § 501—508 and 701—704 (relating to Administrative Agency Law) and 1 Pa. Code Part II (relating to General Rules of Administrative Practice and Procedure).

(c) Appeals related to the Department's approval shall be made by filing a petition within 30 days after service of notice of the action.

(d) Upon receipt of the foster parent appeal, the FFCA shall date stamp the appeal. The FFCA shall review the appeal and determine if steps can be taken to resolve the appeal without a hearing. If, after considering the appeal, the FFCA is unable to resolve issues of disagreement, the appeal shall be sent to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Post Office Box 2675, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105 within 15 calendar days of the date stamp.

(e) Subsection (c) supersedes the appeal period of 1 Pa. Code § 35.20 (relating to appeals from actions of the staff).

One of the laws that has been a great asset to Resource Families is Act 75 of 2015. The Activities and Experiences for Children in Out-of-Home Placements Act. This Pennsylvania law has better implementation as it mirrors Federal law. Hence the Federal government mandated that states follow the new Federal law and Pennsylvania passed Act 75 in 2015 to comply. This law requires all states to implement a "reasonable and prudent parent standard" for decisions made by a resource parent or a designated official for a child care institution.

The good news is we have so many good Statutes in Pennsylvania to support Resource Parents in Practice and Procedural Rights. The not so good news is the lack of implementation on many of these. Solutions for the lack of implementation will be covered in our suggestions for correction at the end. With that said here are some reasons for the disconnect from what it should be to what it really is. First is that the foster care regulations have not been updated for 35 years and this is where many of your practice guidelines come from. Second is the tremendous turnover of workers in the child welfare system. I have heard statistics as low as an average of 6 months in some areas and it takes at least a couple years to learn good case management. Another item is Child welfare workers are trained on legal items such as the juvenile act and regulations but many times not on the stand-alone State laws that include/empower Resource Families such as but not limited to Act 73 the Resource Family Care act or Act 68 Adoption and Safe Process Act. The strongest variable in fixing any breakdown of

implementation is when agencies have their yearly license from OCYF they have to show proof in their agency files just as the other regulations. This is how OCYF shows that the agencies are following regulations and practices or come up with plan of correction to make sure they do it in the future. The standalone laws that were disused are not part of that file review to show the practice implementation for agencies. Therefore, if they are not being followed there is no checks and balances to have corrective actions taken after the licensing process. Again this is an easy no cost solution to assure these Laws are being followed.

The results of not following all of this work that has been done is to slip back to where we do not have enough homes to take care of the children. This would be traumatizing not only to the child welfare system but to the children themselves. Under our regulations you can have up to six children under the age of 18 in a resource home. If you lack homes and fill the home's up with six children who have all experienced trauma, you are going to have disruptions of some of the placements. The system itself will become contributing to the trauma cycle at that point and note that with every removal of a child from a home you increase their trauma and the possibility of them being successful in society. Statistically when there are not enough homes your homes are overextended. Children come into the resource home already experiencing several trauma's including the trauma of being removed from their families. With every traumatized child added to a home you have the possibility of disruption due to the mental health aspects of each child being added to the mix. Again the more children with their own trauma added to the mix, the greater probability that one of them will have a disruption and be re-traumatized (Exception obviously is to keep siblings together). If you get to a place where families don't want to do this again you will have more disruptions, trauma and system failure.

Solutions.

Fortunately, much of the heavy lifting has been done as all of you know how much time, energy, work must go into passing a bill into Law. Now it really is about making sure the implementation of those standalone laws are followed across the Commonwealth for all Resource Families. Another positive is this can be done with no additional cost to the State or any County.

First suggestion is that when staff case workers are trained that they not only get trained on the regulations under the 3680 regulations (which are 35 years old) but they also are trained on the more recent standalone laws that were put in place to help resource families. Unfortunately, after the orientation and pre service training many still do not know their responsibilities to include the Resource Families as part of the team under the new laws and also the appeal rights of all resource families under the 3700 regulations as stated earlier in this testimony.

Second suggestion is another no cost easy one. At the time of the Yearly OCYF licensing for all public and private agencies that while reviewing the files they simply add a checkbox to check off showing that there is a policy that is mandated under the new laws to include Resource Families. Note this work has already been done for a State wide usable policy and it is the last pages of the attached bulletin to this testimony. This was put out by OCYF for the implementation of the referenced laws in this testimony. Note this policy can be used by any public or private agency and was done by all the Child Welfare professionals in PA including OCYF, Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association, Pennsylvania Council of Children Youth and Families and Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators.

In closing we believe that everyone is trying to do what is best for the children and so much work has been done for Procedural and Practices to help Resource Families in Statutes. Now let's get it across the finish to implementation for all Resource Parents across the commonwealth. The system's will be better served and most of all it will be a big step to assure every child has a safe place to call home.

Note all the Laws referenced in this testimony are in a reader's digest version of the Resource Parent Manual on the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association web site (www.psrfa.org)



OFFICE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES BULLETIN

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA * DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

NUMBER:

3700-08-01

ISSUE DATE:

October 1, 2008

EFFECTIVE DATE:

January 21, 2006

SUBJECT:

Implementation of Act 68 of 2005, (The Resource Family and Adoption Process Act), Act 73 of 2005, (The Resource Family Care Act), and Act 76 of 2007

BY:

Richard J. Gold
Deputy Director of Children, Youth and Families

SCOPE:

County Children and Youth Social Service Agencies
Private Children and Youth Social Service Agencies

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide clarification and direction to both public and private children and youth agencies (agencies) regarding the implementation of their legal responsibilities to the resource families with whom they work to provide resource family care for children in the custody of the county children and youth agency.

BACKGROUND:

On November 16, 2005, Governor Edward G. Rendell signed Act 68 of 2005, known as the Resource Family and Adoption Process Act, into law. The intent of this Act is to insure that resource families, interested in becoming an adoptive resource for a child in their care, received fair consideration as a permanent resource. This Act became effective on January 15, 2006, and the Department subsequently issued a letter to Children and Youth Agency Administrators regarding this provision on May 11, 2006.

Also referenced in this bulletin is Act 73 of 2005, known as the Resource Family Care Act, signed into law by Governor Edward G. Rendell on November 22, 2005. This Act was intended to acknowledge the value of resource families by establishing specific mandated responsibilities for agencies in how they collaborate with resource families, thereby insuring productive and respectful treatment. Anticipated benefits of improving the working relationship between agencies and resource families are an increased retention rate of resource families, and an enhanced quality of care to the children they both serve. The Act took effect on January 21, 2006, and the Department issued a letter to Children and Youth Agency Administrators on February 16, 2006.

Lastly, through President George W. Bush's signing into law the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006 on July 3, 2006, which was effective October 1, 2006,

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Regional Directors

Origin: Grace E. Gross, OCYF, P.O. Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675, 717-705-2908, ggross@state.pa.us

resource parents were given the right to be notified of court proceedings relating to the child(ren) in their care, as well as the right, rather than the opportunity, to be heard in court proceedings.

To insure that this important change was reflected in State statute, Governor Edward G. Rendell signed Act 76 of 2007 into law on December 18, 2007, amending §6336.1 (relating to Notice and hearing) of Title 42 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, known as 'The Juvenile Act'. The statute now requires that resource parents be provided the right, rather than the opportunity, to be heard. On May 12, 2008, the Department issued OCYF Bulletin 99-08-01, entitled Implementation of the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children Act of 2006, which addresses many of the new requirements under this Federal statute.

DISCUSSION:

For some county and private agencies, most of the provisions of these Acts were already incorporated into their own best practice, if not actually codified in an agency manual or foster parent handbook. For other agencies, the required practice points were assumed to occur, but there were no clear agency protocols in operation. To begin to address this lack of consistency, representatives from the Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association (PSFPA), now known as the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA); the Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services; and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators convened for roundtable discussions. Their initial meetings produced a comprehensive document that recommended guidelines for implementation of best practice measures that would include the legislative mandates. Most of those guidelines were then incorporated at later meetings into a "Model Agreement of Mutual Rights and Responsibilities". A copy of this agreement, approved by the Department, appears as Attachment A.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) expects all public and private social service agencies that approve resource families to have in place written protocols that document how the agencies insure that the following provisions of Act 68 of 2005, Act 73 of 2005 and Act 76 are standardized as part of the agency's best practice:

- Notification of scheduled meetings to allow resource families to actively participate in the service and permanency planning for the child(ren) in their care;
- Provision of support services consistent with the child(ren)'s permanency plan to assist the resource parents in caring for the child(ren);
- Timely, open and complete responsiveness from the agency when contacted by a resource family regarding their role and their care of the child(ren) placed in their home;
- Provision of information about the child(ren)'s medical, behavioral and familial history as soon as obtained by the agency/provision of information about education, experiential and placement history of the child(ren) within a reasonable amount of time;
- Consultation with the resource family in developing the child(ren)'s permanency plan;
- Consultation with the resource family in the decision to release their address to the child(ren)'s parent, and notification prior to any such release;
- Assistance with the coordination of services to the family, as needed, to help in dealing with the loss of, or separation from, (a) child(ren) in their care, as long as the removal

was not due to an immediate threat to the health or safety of the child(ren) by the resource family;

- Provision of all written agency policies or procedures related to resource family roles;
- Provision of appropriate training to enhance the skills and performance of the resource family;
- Provision of information on how to receive services and reach agency personnel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Assurance of confidentiality regarding any abuse allegations made about a resource family household member, as long as such assurance does not compromise the safety of the child;
- Provision of the opportunity for resource parents to be heard regarding agency decisions and practices involving the child(ren) in their care/assurance that the agency will in no way discriminate or retaliate if resource parents make appropriate inquiry about such decisions or practices;
- Inclusion of a resource family, if interested, as an adoption interview candidate for (a) child(ren) whose goal has been changed to adoption, and who has/have resided in the resource family home for at least six months, as well as an explanation of the criteria for selection, if another family is chosen by the decision-making agency;
- Assurance that the resource family's right to be notified of any court proceedings related to the child(ren) in their care happens as soon as the agency receives the information; agencies should consider assisting resource parents in how to prepare for court, and in becoming more comfortable with court appearances;
- Assurance that the right of the resource family to be heard during any court proceeding related to the child(ren) in their care is preserved and encouraged in a proactive manner; and
- Assurance that no resource parent shall be denied consideration as an adoptive resource solely because the resource parent cannot be accessed as a resource parent in the future.

Agencies are required to amend their policy and procedures to comply with these Acts, and must have a standard document that lists out all of these provisions, and that can be provided to prospective resource family applicants for thorough review prior to approval. A signed copy of the document must be part of the approval process. Agencies may choose to use an adapted version of the attached model agreement with its signature page. Having a signed copy of the model agreement in the resource family record assures that agencies are fulfilling the legislative mandate to provide a copy to the resource family, and provides agencies with a signed agreement by the resource families that agency expectations are understood.

Attachment A

**Model Agreement of
Mutual Rights and Responsibilities**

The following is suggested model language which can be added to the agreement between an agency and resource parents, including foster, kinship and adoptive parents, to address the requirements of Act 68 of 2005, Act 73 of 2005 and Act 76 of 2007.

1. Both [the Agency] and resource parent(s) will interact with each other with consideration, respect and fairness and mutually work to develop and maintain a positive working relationship.
2. [The Agency] will treat resource parents as part of the team in caring for the child(ren) served and agree to work collaboratively to ensure their safety, permanency, and well-being.
3. [The Agency] will respond in an open, complete and timely fashion when contacted by the resource parents regarding questions, issues or concerns about their role and/or the care of the child(ren) in their home.
4. [The Agency] will inform the resource parents regarding the child's medical history, mental health diagnosis, general behaviors, relationships between the child and his/her parents, educational history, life experiences, and previous and prospective placement circumstances to facilitate the resource parents' care for the child. The availability and timeliness of this information being available to [The Agency] will affect how quickly it can be shared with the resource parents. [The Agency] will continue to update the resource parents as appropriate when additional information is received.
5. Resource parents have the **right** to be notified of any court proceedings related to the child(ren) in their care as soon as [The Agency] knows when such proceedings will occur. Additionally, (The Agency) will provide resource parents as much notice as possible of scheduled meetings regarding the child(ren) in their care, to facilitate their participation in all case planning and decision-making processes, including Individual Service Plan (ISP) meetings.
6. Resource parents are expected and encouraged to attend meetings and to actively participate and offer input into the service and permanency planning process regarding the child(ren) in their care. Resource parents agree to implement and/or facilitate the actions stated in the ISP to the best of their ability, and to notify (The Agency) of any need for technical assistance and/or support services.
7. [The Agency] will work with the resource parents to identify, facilitate, arrange and/or provide support services to assist in the care of the child consistent with the child's ISP. Such support services include, but are not limited to, medical and dental care, mental health and/or substance abuse evaluation and/or treatment, and social work services. Individualized educational planning and services will be determined and implemented in mutual cooperation with the child's legal parent(s), school staff, [Agency] staff and resource parents.
8. The resource parents agree to provide transportation for the child to and from any appointments, including for medical and dental care, therapy, evaluation, counseling, education and/or any other care, treatment, or service appointment. Resource parents also agree to provide transportation to and from meetings regarding the child in their home, including ISP and court reviews. [The Agency] will work with the resource parents to arrange transportation, as needed.

9. [The Agency] will provide orientation information, including a review of Agency policies and procedures, applicable state regulations or statutes, emergency and non-emergency Agency contact information and protocols, and instructions on how to receive services. In addition, [the Agency] will provide on-going direction, supervision, and in-service training for resource parents to maintain continued understanding of mutual expectations, roles, and needs.
10. The resource parents agree to ensure the confidentiality of all information provided to them about the child and his/her parents and/or extended family, and to only share information received from the child and his/her parents and/or extended family with Agency staff or other professionals (i.e. physician, therapist, etc.) as appropriate. The resource parents also agree to be supportive of a child's relationship with his/her birth family and treat and/or speak of them with consideration and respect.
11. In accordance with state regulations, [the Agency] will provide the name, address and phone number of the resource parents to the parents of the child in their home, unless doing so (a) is restricted by court order, (b) threatens the health and well-being of the child or resource family, or (c) if [the Agency] is able to document a plausible basis for refusing such disclosure. [The Agency] will advise the resource parent as to the timing of the release of this information and will be available to address any concerns the resource family may have regarding this process.
12. Upon request, [The Agency] will work with the resource parents to assist with the coordination of services needed to address family loss and separation issues stemming from a child leaving the resource family's home, when such relocation is not the result of an immediate threat to the health and safety of the child caused by the resource family.
13. In the event that the goal for a child who has resided with the resource parents for at least six (6) months is changed to adoption and the resource parents are interested in being an adoptive resource for the child, [the Agency] will ensure that the resource parents are interviewed and considered by the appropriate county or private agency. When more than one adoptive resource is available, the Agency shall document the basis for selection of the adoptive family resource for the child in the child's case record. The agency shall share information regarding the criteria used in the selection of the adoptive family with the resource parents within the limitations of confidentiality provisions.
14. Resource parents agree to complete a minimum of [six (6)] hours of training annually as required by state regulations or in compliance with [The Agency] policies to enhance their skills and abilities in areas requested and/or deemed necessary. Resource parents are encouraged to seek additional training above the minimum requirements in order to further enhance their performance and abilities in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
15. According to state law, [The Agency] staff are mandated to report child abuse. In the event that an allegation of abuse is made regarding a resource parent or member of their household, [the Agency] will follow protocols in reporting the allegation and ensuring the safety of the child. [The Agency] will ensure that information pertaining to the report is kept confidential and released only in accordance with state regulation. The Agency policies will be shared with the resource parents.
16. Resource parents have the **right** to be heard in any court proceedings related to the child(ren) in their care, and should be provided the opportunity to be heard regarding Agency decisions or practices involving a child(ren) residing in with their home. [The Agency] will not discharge, threaten or otherwise discriminate or retaliate against the resource parents for an appropriate inquiry regarding such decisions or practices.
17. [The Agency] will provide a copy of this Agreement to the resource parents upon their approval as a resource family, along with a copy of the responsibilities enumerated in Act 73, the Resource Family Care Act and Act 68, the Resource Family and Adoption Process Act.

It is the responsibility of resource parents to help the child served in their home. To do the best job, it is important that the resource parents and the Agency develop a positive working relationship by both using a common sense set of standards. There may be occasions when the resource parents and the caseworker are unable to agree on matters relating to the child. If this should occur, there are steps to follow to maximize the opportunity to resolve areas of disagreement. Resource parents have the assurance that these steps can be taken with confidence that the Agency will not discharge, threaten, discriminate or retaliate when decisions and practices are questioned that are in the interest of the children in care.

- A. Let the caseworker know that there is an area of disagreement. If resource parents are not satisfied with the response, go to the next level.
- B. Contact the caseworker's immediate supervisor and ask for a meeting. If not satisfied with the response, go to the next level.
- C. Contact the Director of Placement Services and ask for a meeting with all parties.
- D. If you are unable to reach anyone because of voice mail or night and weekends, and it involves a matter that cannot wait:
 - 1. **Weekdays** - Call the main Agency number (Phone Number) and ask to speak to someone immediately.
 - 2. **Evenings and Weekends** - Call the on-call caseworker (Phone Number)

Please remember that every problem has a solution if we take the time to ask questions and work as a team. If you have questions about resource family care in general or Agency policy, you may contact your caseworker. At any time during this process you can also contact the Local Foster Parent Association for support, which can be reached at (Phone Number). Our goal is to maximize your resource family care experiences for you and the child entrusted to your care.

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE

DATE

RESOURCE PARENT

RESOURCE PARENT