



Foster Care

Policies and Procedures

Children's Aid Society

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Foster Care Philosophy & Program Description

Philosophy

Children's Aid Society's philosophy is based on the belief that a loving, supportive, stable family atmosphere is the best possible environment for raising children. Through our foster care program, we strive to place children in homes where they will be loved, nurtured, and given every opportunity for future success.

Foster Care Program Goals and Objectives

Foster care is a program designed to provide substitute family life experience for a child at a time of crisis or need in their life. Foster care is provided to a child when the child's family is unable or unwilling to provide a home and care for them. Foster care is time-limited, temporary care. Foster families provide parental care and supervision, working with the placing agency staff with the goal of achieving permanence for the child. Foster parents come from all walks of life. They are of all races, nationalities, and economic situations. Foster care is not a lifetime commitment, but a commitment to be meaningful to a child during his/her time of need.

Children's Aid Society's Foster Care Program serves families primarily from the central and western regions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Foster care placement can be provided for children from Pennsylvania and other states as well as from private, domestic, and international sources.

Additional Program Goals and Objectives:

1. To provide stable foster care homes to children who *may* be available for adoption. The family accepts the child on a temporary foster care basis, but may be considered as an adoptive resource at a later point. The foster family provides the child with on-going care, nurturing, and age-appropriate supervision, including food, clothing, and shelter appropriate to the physical and emotional needs of the children.
2. To provide temporary foster care for an identified child who is not yet legally free, within the identified adoptive parent's home in order to facilitate adoption should that become a possibility. The family must cooperate with reunification and/or visitation as required by the agency with legal custody.
3. To identify prospective adoptive families who are interested in foster children that are a good match and may become available for adoption.
4. To insure that no child will be denied consideration for foster care because of his/her age, sex, religion, race, nationality, place of residence, economic or social status, or a handicap that does not prevent him/her from living in a family situation.
5. To provide either directly, indirectly, or through referral, counseling and other services as needed to foster care parents and the child.
6. To minimize the number of moves a child has to make within the system.

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Summary of Foster Family Regulations

All policies are subject to the policies and procedures of the placing agency and the court. Regulations mandate that the agency and foster parents must comply with certain requirements in order for the agency to receive continued State and Federal funding for agency programs.

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Policy Name:	Family and Agency Responsibilities
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Foster Families Responsibilities to the Child:

1. Provide a stable, caring environment for the child; ensure that the foster family home is clean and appropriate to the physical needs of the child.
2. Ensure that the child's needs are met, including, but not limited to, food, shelter, and clothing.
3. Conduct day-to-day care of the child, including discipline, education, and family life as well as oversee recreational, social, and medical related activities.
4. Help the child through the grieving and adjustment process that accompanies removal from his/her own home and placement.
5. Display a positive attitude with the child regarding visits.
6. Prepare child for visits, by discussing the specific arrangements for visits and sending special/personal items for the child.
7. Assist the child in preparing to return home or being moved to an adoptive home.
8. Maintain a record for the child of their time in care, including developmental milestones, photographs, report cards, etc., and to supply the child with activities and/or items for his/her Lifebook.
9. Encourage Children's Aid Society staff's relationship with the child.
10. Inform the child that information the child gives you may need to be shared with Children's Aid Society staff, especially if the information could lead to harm to the child or others.
11. Avoid demeaning the biological parents to the child or to others.
12. Talk openly with the child about his/her family and allow for the open expression of his/her emotions.

Foster Families Responsibilities to the Agency:

1. Attend/complete foster parent training; six hours per year for **each** foster parent.
2. Provide transportation when necessary for appointments, such as those to the placing agency or Children's Aid Society, medical health services, mental health services, and visits.
3. Keep the child's medical and mental health records updated.
4. Keep Children's Aid Society staff updated on the child and family's interaction, progress, difficulties, medical/health related issues, etc.
5. Work with Children's Aid Society staff to provide visitation and phone/mail contact between child and biological parent(s).
6. Meet with Children's Aid Society staff as recommended by the placing agency.
7. Notify Children's Aid Society staff immediately regarding changes in family make-up or changes in sleeping arrangements. Advance notice must be given regarding changes in phone number or address and changes relating to vacations or out-of-state travel.
8. Maintain confidentiality in relation to the child and information pertaining to the child.

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9. Give 30 days notice when requesting removal of the child.
10. Comply with state regulations and agency policies and procedures as outlined in the Foster Care Policies and Procedures.
11. Respect the final decisions made by the placing agency or court.
12. Adhere to confidentiality requirements, respect the confidential nature of family information, and not discuss the information given to you by the placing agency, Children's Aid Society staff, or the child with anyone outside your immediate family.
13. Sign a placement agreement with Children's Aid Society at the time of the child's placement.

Foster Families Responsibilities to Biological Parents:

1. Be flexible and accommodating of a visiting plan, which permits the foster child to spend time with his/her family.
2. Cooperate with visitation; if visitation is in your home, assist in making the biological parent feel comfortable and allow time with the child.
3. Help the child maintain a realistic perception and attitude towards biological parents.
4. When requested by Children's Aid Society staff, to model and discuss appropriate parenting behavior with the biological parent.
5. To provide necessary and appropriate information about the child's growth and development, likes, dislikes, etc. to the biological parent.
6. To prepare the child to return home.

Children's Aid Society Responsibilities:

1. Make decisions in conjunction with the placing agency regarding the child's placement and any decisions relating to placement.
2. Make decisions in the best interests of the child and foster family.
3. Make referrals for any necessary services available, such as psychiatric, psychological, medical, social work, school, etc.
4. Have regular contact and scheduled/unscheduled visits with the foster family and child based on the recommendations of the placing agency.
5. Provide support, direction, and suggestions in dealing with any difficulties arising within the foster home and make any changes should they be necessary.
6. Contact schools, physicians, and other services/agencies the foster family or child is involved with to receive updates.
7. Provide on-call assistance for emergencies.
8. Provide annual trainings for the foster family.
9. Maintain current and accurate files on the foster family and child.
10. Provide monetary reimbursement for room, board, and supervision, at a per diem rate, in addition to clothing, special needs allowances, and approved transportation mileage reimbursement.

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Policy Name:	Foster Family Home Requirements
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.66, 3700.31, 3700.67

The foster home shall have:

1. At least one flush toilet, one wash basin, a bath or shower with hot and cold running water;
2. An operable heating system;
3. An operable telephone; emergency phone numbers for fire, police, ambulance, and poison control must be conspicuously posted adjacent to all telephones.
4. Sleeping areas meeting the following criteria:
 - a. No unsuitable area, such as hall, stairway, unfinished attic or basement, garage, bathroom, eating area, closet, shed, or detached building.
 - b. Separate bedrooms for foster children of the opposite sex who are five years of age and older.
 - c. A clean comfortable mattress, clean linen, clean blankets, and a clean pillow.
5. No more than six children in a foster family, including the foster parent(s') biological children.
6. After application to the foster care program, no additional children or adults may reside in the foster home without Children's Aid Society staff approval.
7. Medication and containers of poisonous, caustic, toxic, flammable, or other dangerous material kept in the home distinctly marked or labeled as hazardous and stored in locked areas inaccessible to children under five years of age.
8. Fireplaces, fireplace inserts, wood and coal burning stoves, and freestanding space heaters, if allowed by local ordinance, installed, equipped, and operated according to manufacturers' specifications and requirements specified by local ordinance.
9. An operable smoke detector placed on each level of the residence. This includes, in addition to the main floors, the basement, and if used as a living area, the attic. The detector is to be maintained in operable condition at all times.
10. A portable fire extinguisher, suitable for Class B fires, available in the kitchen and other cooking areas. The extinguisher is to be tested yearly or have a gauge to ensure adequate pressure.
11. Protective safety caps placed in all electrical outlets accessible to children younger than five years of age.
12. No exposed electrical wires.
13. Drinking water from an individual water source potable as determined by an annual microbiological test conducted by a laboratory certified by the Department of Environmental Resources.
14. Car seats that meet the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards to transport children between the ages of newborn and eight in a motor vehicle.

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Policy Name:	Foster Parent Application
Procedure Location:	s:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.62, Pennsylvania Acts 33 and 34

Recruitment

Families are recruited from the agency's waiting adoptive families, as well as from the community. Families chosen are those that are well suited to meet the necessary challenges and responsibilities of a foster family. Pre-adoptive families understand that children are placed at legal risk. A legal risk placement is when a child is placed with a prospective adoptive family and the child is not yet legally free for adoption. A child becomes legally free once all biological parental rights are terminated or the biological parents have relinquished their parental rights. In the case of a legal risk placement, either the termination has not occurred yet or it has and is being contested in court by the birth family.

Criteria for Acceptance for Service

Prospective foster care families will be considered as applicants for the program if they meet the criteria of Children's Aid Society, the placing agency and/or the requirements of Pennsylvania law and regulation depending on the origin of the placement.

Criteria shall include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Applicant(s) who can provide a personal medical history and recent physical examination by a licensed physician, which states that they are in good physical, mental, and emotional health and able to undertake the responsibilities of parenthood. Applicant(s) must not have any serious illnesses of a chronic, debilitating, and/or life-threatening nature. Further medical exams may be required by the agency if the agency has reason to believe that additional medical or psychological appraisals are appropriate.
2. Foster parents must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
3. Foster parents cannot receive public assistance in the forms of housing assistance, food assistance, or disability as the primary means of income.
4. Foster parents who have been married to each other or cohabitating for a minimum of three (3) years.
5. In the event a foster parent marries or begins cohabitating after the initial approval into the foster care program, it is the foster parent's responsibility to notify the agency **prior** to the marriage or cohabitation. Spouses and partners are required to meet foster care regulations and also all agency policies.
6. Applicant(s) who can provide written personal references.
7. Applicant(s) who are willing to attend counseling sessions with the child as needed and who are willing to work cooperatively with the child.
8. Applicant(s) who have tolerance and flexibility for the individual characteristics, background, and behaviors of the child.
9. Applicant(s) who have adequate living space to promote the health, safety, and well-being of the family.

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10. Applicant(s) who have the maturity to provide for the emotional and financial needs of the child as well as other family members.
11. Applicant's previous addresses within the last ten years. The addresses are also required on the Pennsylvania ChildLine Abuse Form (Act 34).
12. Applicant's composition of the family unit, including the total number of children in the home and their relationship to the applicant. The composition of the family unit is also required on the Pennsylvania ChildLine Abuse Form (Act 34).
13. Applicant's financial stability (income verification, employment history, current liens, and bankruptcies within the last ten years.)
14. Applicant's information on special needs children living in the home. The applicant's history as a foster parent, including the number and types of children served.
15. Applicant's related education, training, or personal experience with foster care or child welfare.
16. A signed statement verifying that no immediate adult family member has a record of criminal action involving a child.
17. Documentation from the Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania State ChildLine, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Fingerprint-Based Criminal Record Check is required for all individuals residing in the home age 18 and older at the time of application.
 - a. In addition to the above criminal record checks, any prospective foster parent or any individual over 18 years of age residing in the home, who has resided outside of Pennsylvania within the previous five-year period, must request a record check within that state as to whether they are named as a perpetrator of child abuse.
 - b. Submission of a child abuse record check from another state is also required within 30 days when any individual over 18 years of age, who has resided outside of Pennsylvania within the past five years, begins residing in the home of an approved foster family.
18. The Clean Indoor Air Act Compliance Agreement will be signed by the foster parents and will be kept in their home study/foster file.
19. Applicant(s) shall read and agree to uphold all policies in the Foster Care Policies and Procedures and sign a receipt of acknowledgment of receiving the policies and procedures.
20. Additional factors shall be considered on a case-by-case basis as relevant.

If available, the following information is obtained through the county caseworker employed by Children, Youth, and Family Services:

1. The PFA orders filed by or against the applicant.
2. The family court proceedings.

The following information is obtained through Pennsylvania Acts 33 and 34:

1. The applicant's drug/alcohol arrests, criminal charges, or proceedings pending, and convictions for five years.
2. The applicant's drug/alcohol conviction.
3. The applicant's information relating to criminal homicide, aggravated assault, stalking, kidnapping, unlawful restraint, rape, statutory sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault, indecent

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exposure, incest, concealing death of a child, endangering welfare of children, dealing in infant children, prostitution and related offenses, obscene and other sexual materials and performances, corruption of minors, sexual abuse of children, or an equivalent crime under federal law or the law of another state.

Once the above information is successfully completed, the prospective foster family proceeds to the foster care study process.

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Procedure Name:	Foster Care Study
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.72

After the completion of the application process, the Children's Aid Society staff assigned to the prospective foster family will complete an interview in the home with the entire family. An interview is scheduled to obtain a sense of the family interactions and physical home environment and to visit the community to obtain first-hand observations.

The prospective foster parent(s) are interviewed separately and jointly. The interview requests a broad base of information including, but not necessarily limited to:

1. Existing family structure
2. Courtship and marriage (if applicable)
3. Motivation for seeking to foster
4. Best and worst personal qualities
5. The best and worst quality of spouse (if applicable)
6. Childhood and family history
7. Educational background
8. Hobbies and recreational activities
9. Expectations for their children
10. View of discipline
11. Prior experience with other foster care agencies

The family interview in the home provides an opportunity to address the following:

1. The extended family's attitudes toward foster care/adoption
2. A description of the interior and exterior of the home
3. A description of the type of neighborhood
4. A listing of residences since leaving parent's home
5. Review of financial accounts, assets, debts, expenses, and insurance
6. Attitudes on discipline and child rearing
7. Discussion of previous parenting experiences or training

The foster care study includes the following items:

- Application Form
- Confidential Disclosure Statement
- Complaint Notification
- Release of Confidential Information
- Autobiographies
- References
- Copy of Driver's Licenses
- Copy of Birth Certificates, which include birth parents' names
- Copy of Social Security Cards (for anyone that resides in the household)

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- Fiscal Information
- Social Security Statements
- Medical Records (for anyone that resides in the household over 18 years of age)
- Copy of Marriage License (if applicable)
- Copy of Divorce Decree (if applicable)
- Copy of Homeowner's Insurance
- Copy of insurance and registration for all vehicles
- Acknowledgement of Foster Parent Orientation / Policies & Procedures
- Discipline Policy
- Acknowledgement of Foster Parent Role
- Agreement of Mutual Rights and Responsibilities
- CY-131 Family Resource Registry
- Clean Indoor Air Act Compliance Agreement
- Home Safety Checklist
- Well Water Test (if applicable)
- Pet Vaccinations (if applicable)
- Clearances (for anyone that resides in the household over 18 years of age)
 - Child Abuse History
 - FBI
 - State Police
- Disclosure statements (for anyone that resides in the household over 18 years of age)
- Statement in Regard to Conviction of Harassment
- Acknowledgement of Sexual Misconduct Policies and Procedures
- Verification Checks
 - CYFS
 - Law Enforcement
 - Prothonotary
- Training

All information obtained is reviewed and written into the foster care study by Children's Aid Society staff. At that time, Children's Aid Society staff will either approve or deny the prospective foster parent(s) as a resource. The prospective foster parent(s) receive a copy of the foster care study and sign their acceptance of the accuracy of the contents and authorize release of the document to the appropriate agencies.

Acceptance/Rejection

Once all application procedures and required program criteria are met, the foster family is notified in writing of their approval status. The foster family will be approved, disapproved, or provisionally approved as a foster family. To be approved as a foster family:

1. The family must successfully complete the application and background check process;
and
2. The family must successfully complete the foster care study process.

If approved, the foster family is notified of age of children, number of children, etc., that they are approved to foster. Approved foster families are re-evaluated on an annual basis.

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Orientation

Children's Aid Society staff will provide orientation training for new foster families. The orientation shall include information about:

1. Agency philosophy;
2. Agency practices and policies;
3. Roles of the foster family;
4. Agency policies and procedures for discipline, punishment, and control of foster children;
5. Agency policies and procedures for confidentiality;
6. Roles of the agency in assisting the foster family in serving children;
7. First aid procedures; and
8. Applicable statutes, regulations, and general procedures, including appeal procedures.

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Procedure Name:	Foster Parent Approval
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.72

Temporary Approval

Temporary approval is a time-limited status, which may be authorized when a complete assessment of the foster family has not been made prior to the placement of a foster child. Temporary approval is given when a child needs to be placed in a foster family on an emergency basis. Children's Aid Society may authorize temporary approval only if a partial assessment of the family indicates that a foster child's health or safety will not be jeopardized if placed with the temporarily approved foster family. The partial assessment shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. An on-site visit to the home.
2. An inspection of the physical aspects of the home.
3. A brief assessment of the social and emotional qualities of the foster parent(s) as they affect his/her ability to care for a foster child.
4. The willingness of the foster parent(s) to accept Children's Aid Society staff involvement and work cooperatively with Children's Aid Society staff.
5. The ability of the foster parent(s) to meet the special needs of a child taken into the temporary protective custody of an agency.

Temporary approval of a foster family may be authorized for a maximum of 60 calendar days, starting from the date on which Children's Aid Society staff places the foster child with the foster family. The foster family must comply with the remaining requirements to become an approved foster family within 60 days or the approval terminates automatically, and the foster child shall be removed from the foster family.

Provisional Approval

Provisional approval of a foster family may be authorized by Children's Aid Society when a previously approved foster family is determined, in a re-evaluation, not to meet one or more of the requirements. Children's Aid Society will authorize provisional approval only if the identified areas of regulatory noncompliance will not result in an immediate threat to the health or safety of the foster child placed with the foster family. During a period of provisional approval, Children's Aid Society may not place additional children with the foster family. Children's Aid Society may authorize provisional approval only if a partial assessment of the family indicates that a foster child's health or safety will not be jeopardized by residing with the provisionally approved foster family. The partial assessment shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. An on-site visit to the home.
2. An inspection of the physical aspects of the home.
3. A brief assessment of the social and emotional qualities of the foster parent(s) as they affect his/her ability to care for a foster child.

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Provisional approval of a foster family may be maintained no longer than 12 months. The foster family's approval terminates automatically if they are unable to achieve compliance, and the foster child shall be removed from the foster family. Once a foster family meets all of the requirements, they will be fully approved as a foster family. If a foster family does not meet all of the requirements, they will not be approved.

Foster Parent Approval Appeal:

1. The program manager will give written notice to each foster family of the decision to approve, disapprove, or provisionally approve the foster family. The written notice will inform the foster parent(s) that he/she may appeal the decision to disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family.
2. A foster parent(s) who wishes to appeal the decision to disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family will submit to Children's Aid Society a written appeal, post-marked no later than 15 calendar days from the date of the written notice.
3. Upon receipt of the foster parent appeal, the administrative assistant will date stamp the appeal. The program manager will review the appeal and consult with the Assistant Director, Executive Director, and Adoption Committee of the Board of Directors, as needed, to determine if steps can be taken to resolve the appeal without a hearing. If, after considering the appeal, Children's Aid Society is unable to resolve issues of disagreement, the appeal will be sent to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Post Office Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105 within 15 calendar days of the date stamp.
4. Children's Aid Society's Complaint Procedures do not apply in this instance.

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Procedure Name:	Foster Parent Training
Procedure Location:	s:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.65

Pennsylvania state law requires that foster parents receive a *minimum* of six hours of training per year. EACH foster parent must successfully complete a minimum of six hours of agency approved training annually.

Children's Aid Society staff will provide annual training opportunities for foster parents, which may include, but is not limited to: classes, speakers, or presentations. Other media and learning methods may also be approved for training credits with prior approval by Children's Aid Society program manager.

Approved foster families will be notified prior to the date of each such scheduled program regarding the date, location, times, and content of the program.

After a foster parent completes any approved trainings, he/she will complete and submit a Transfer of Learning form and a copy of his/her completion certificate to Children's Aid Society staff. If needed, Children's Aid Society staff will give each foster parent copies of the Transfer of Learning form to complete.

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Procedure Name:	Annual Evaluation
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.69, Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Each foster home will be visited and evaluated annually by Children's Aid Society staff. The evaluation is used to determine continued compliance with state regulatory requirements for foster care. During the annual evaluation, each foster parent must have a yearly physical completed and submit a completed Medical Record Form. In addition, each foster parent must complete and submit a completed Disclosure Statement. Clearances including the Pennsylvania State ChildLine, Pennsylvania State Police, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Fingerprint-Based Criminal Record Check are also required bi-annually. Each foster family receives written notice from the program manager regarding the results of the annual evaluation.

Any deficiencies found during the re-evaluation will be noted and a correction plan will be established. The date by which the correction must be accomplished will be specified. If corrections are required, the foster home is considered out of compliance and will be placed on provisional status. While on provisional status, no additional children may be placed in the home. If, after 12 months, the foster parent(s) has not made the necessary corrections, the foster family's approval terminates automatically, and the foster child shall be removed from the foster family.

Foster parents have the right to appeal any adverse regulatory action if they believe they have met necessary regulatory requirements. A foster parent(s) who wishes to appeal the decision to disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family will submit to Children's Aid Society a written appeal, post-marked no later than 15 calendar days from the date of the written notice. Upon receipt of the foster parent appeal, the administrative assistant will date stamp the appeal. The program manager will review the appeal and consult with the Assistant Director, Executive Director, and Adoption Committee of the Board of Directors, as needed, to determine if steps can be taken to resolve the appeal without a hearing. If, after considering the appeal, Children's Aid Society is unable to resolve issues of disagreement, the appeal will be sent to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Post Office Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105 within 15 calendar days of the date stamp. Children's Aid Society's Complaint Procedures do not apply in this instance.

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Policy Name:	Mandated Reporter
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Personnel Policy 3.6

Under Pennsylvania law, foster parents are mandated reporters. If a foster parent has reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them is a victim of child abuse, he/she must immediately make a report of suspected child abuse.

A report can be made by contacting ChildLine (1-800-932-0313). This line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Reports can also be submitted electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis.

The foster parent must notify Children's Aid Society staff immediately when a report is made to ChildLine. If a report was submitted electronically, the foster parent must print out a copy of the completed report as well as the confirmation statement and submit it to Children's Aid Society staff no later than the next business day.

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Policy Name:	Abuse Allegations Against Foster Parents
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	
Effective Date:	
Date(s) of Revision:	4/3/2017
References:	

Child abuse reports are sometimes filed naming the foster parent(s) as an alleged perpetrator of child abuse. So that there can be no alleged conflict of interest for Children's Aid Society when a foster parent(s) is the subject of an abuse allegation, staff from the regional office of the Office of Children, Youth, and Families conduct the investigation. Regional offices are located in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Scranton, and Philadelphia.

Following the ChildLine report and during the course of the investigation, Children's Aid Society needs to ensure the safety of the foster child. In many situations, it will be necessary to remove the foster child from the foster parent home while the investigation is conducted.

The foster parent(s) will receive a copy of the reports that are filed if requested. If the report is indicated, meaning that there was evidence to support an allegation of abuse, then Children's Aid Society will need to decide what course of action is most appropriate.

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Procedure Name:	Complaint Policy and Procedures
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	

It is Children's Aid Society's policy that we encourage any birth parent, prospective foster parent, foster parent, or foster child to lodge directly with the agency signed and dated complaints about any of the services or activities of the agency that he or she believes raise an issue of compliance and advises such individuals of the additional procedures available to them if he/she are dissatisfied with the agency's response to the complaint.

Children's Aid Society will not take any action to discourage or retaliate against any birth parent, prospective foster parent, foster parent, or foster child because he or she has filed a complaint, given testimony, or otherwise appeared before the Board of Directors or any of its committees in connection with a complaint, grievance, or an appeal.

Children's Aid Society takes all complaints and grievances seriously. All documentation will be maintained in the client's file.

As part of Children's Aid Society's Continuous Quality Improvement Plan, complaint data will be reviewed annually by the Executive Staff and the Adoption Committee.

The following procedures have been established to ensure that all sides and parties to any complaint receive fair and equal hearing by those responsible for resolving complaints. Complaints refer to any agency action or action by a specific staff member that the birth parent, prospective foster parent, foster parent, or foster child is not in agreement with.

1. All parties will be provided with a copy of the complaint policy and procedure in the Foster Care Policies and Procedures at the time of orientation training. Children's Aid Society staff will review the policy and procedure with all parties at that time. Then, all parties will sign and date the notification form.

The complaint policy and procedure, also known as the Child Grievance Form, will be explained to foster children (who can be reasonably expected to understand it) in a clearly understandable fashion at their first meeting with Children's Aid Society staff. The child will sign the policy and receive a copy of the signed policy. They will receive assurance that there will be no negative repercussions. (DPW Regulation 3680.48)

2. When a birth parent, prospective foster parent, foster parent, or foster child has a complaint, he/she should first discuss the complaint with Children's Aid Society staff. If an agreement is not reached through this discussion, he/she should proceed to the next step of this complaint procedure.

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3. The birth parent, prospective foster parent, or foster parent must submit a complaint in writing to the program manager. Mail complaints to Children's Aid Society, Attn: Foster Care Program Manager, 1008 S. 2nd St., Clearfield, PA 16830.

The child may submit a written complaint to Children's Aid Society staff. Staff will forward the written complaint to the program manager.

4. Once notified in writing, Children's Aid Society will initiate an investigation of the complaint within two business days. The aggrieved client will receive a Receipt of Grievance form so he/she knows his/her complaint was received.
5. The program manager will reply to the aggrieved client's written complaint in writing within ten business days. Foster children will receive their reply using the Decision of Complaint form.

If more time is needed to resolve the complaint, the program manager will inform the aggrieved client and make every effort to provide a written resolution to the complaint and report the actions that were taken to resolve such complaint within 30 working days.

6. If the aggrieved client is not satisfied or if the conflict is with the program manager, she/he may contact Children's Aid Society's Assistant Director to further discuss the matter. The Assistant Director will conduct a review of the matter and will respond to the aggrieved client in writing within ten business days.
7. The Assistant Director will attempt to resolve the conflict within ten business days of its receipt. The Assistant Director must issue a written decision and provide a copy of same to the aggrieved client.

The Assistant Director will summarize in writing the agency's issues, the aggrieved client's issues, and the outcome. This summary will be filed in the aggrieved client's confidential information file, and a copy will be provided to the aggrieved client.

8. If the decision of the Assistant Director does not resolve the conflict, the aggrieved client may present his or her complaint to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will review the matter and respond to the aggrieved client in writing within ten business days.
9. If the decision of the Executive Director does not resolve the conflict, the aggrieved client may present his or her complaint back to the Executive Director who will inform the Board of Directors in writing of the complaint.
10. The Board of Directors will assign the Adoption Committee to investigate the complaint. The committee will review the contents of the file related to the complaint. If needed, the committee will interview the aggrieved client filing the complaint as well as any staff involved. The Adoption Committee will make a report and recommendation to the Board of Directors who will then take action to make a final determination.

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The program manager will notify the Adoption Committee of the Board of Directors of any and all formal complaints received.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Children Considered for Service
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	

Children considered for service include:

1. Those who have lost both parents by death and have no other strong family ties.
2. Those whose birth parents are unable or unwilling to provide a home and care for them during a period of time, while the birth parents receive help through other community resources.
3. Those whose birth parents are unable or unwilling, even with help from other community resources, to give them the care and protection they need, and who may be freed for adoption through court action (involuntary termination of parental rights).
4. Children considered for placement who are at legal risk – parental rights have not yet been terminated or the termination decree is under appeal.

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Policy Name:	Classification of Children
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	9/10/2018
Effective Date:	9/10/2018
Date(s) of Revision:	
References:	

Children's Aid Society classifies foster children according to the following criteria:

Class 1 Ages 0-9 years old

This class includes all dependent children ages 0-9 years of age. A dependent child is defined as a child that is without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for his/her physical, mental or emotional health, or morals. A determination that there is a lack of proper parental care or control may be based upon evidence of conduct by the parent, guardian or other custodian that places the health, safety or welfare of the child at risk, including evidence of the parent's, guardian's or other custodian's use of alcohol or a controlled substance that places the health, safety or welfare of the child at risk.

Resource parents provide daily care of the child including: food, clothing, shelter, supervision, transportation, education and health care needs.

Class 2 Ages 10-21 years old

This class includes all dependent children ages 10-21 years of age that do not have any significant behavioral issues, mental health needs, criminal charges or special needs as indicated above. These children may have truancy issues, parent/child conflict and incorrigible behaviors.

Resource parents provide daily care of the child including: food, clothing, shelter, supervision, transportation, education and health care needs, truancy visits.

Class 3 Ages: 0-21 years old, Special Needs

Children who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. Licensed documentation is needed. Special needs criteria may include but are not limited to the following:

Medical Issues: brain damage/disorder, heart problems, pregnancy, legally blind/deaf, seizure disorder, HIV/AIDS, medical problems and delays caused by alcohol/drug exposed infant.

Physical Limitations/Disabilities: bone disease, wheel chair bound, amputee.

Mental Health: significant delays, life skills, mental retardation, severe emotional disability, reactive attachment disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, autism/asperger's syndrome, severe physical/sexual abuse needing extensive out-treatment and high supervision around other children.

Class 4 Ages: 10-21 years old, Juvenile Delinquent

A delinquent child is a child that is ten years of age or older whom the court has found to have

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committed a delinquent act and is in need of treatment, supervision or rehabilitation. This would be a child that is involved with Juvenile Probation, but does not need a detention center, group home or RTF level of care. This child could be maintained safely in a resource home with the appropriate amount of supervision (including a GPS monitoring system or ankle bracelet) and recommended services.

Resource parents provide daily care of the child including: food, clothing, shelter, increased supervision, increased transportation, truancy, education and health care needs

Class 5 Dependent mother and non-dependent child

This class is for female youth ages 12-21 years of age, who are bringing into care with them their non-dependent child. This class will provide a supportive home environment for the female youth and her child. This will be a placement where the dependent mother can learn appropriate parenting skills and knowledge while caring for her child.

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Policy Name:	Placement of a Child
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Decisions regarding foster family selection for a foster child will rest with Children's Aid Society and the placing county children and youth services agency. Decisions regarding the actual placement rest with the prospective foster family, the placing children and youth services agency, and Children's Aid Society. In matching a child with a foster family, the needs, strengths, characteristics, and limitations of both parties are taken into consideration. Children may have diverse backgrounds in reference to race, ethnicity, religion, etc. Children may have one or a variety of special needs. The needs may include, but are not limited to: mental or physical handicaps; being a minority; being a member of a sibling group; or having a predisposition for physical, mental, or emotional disabilities, due to heredity or developed through abuse and/or neglect.

Standard for the Agency/Foster Parent Relationship

Every effort is made to match a child being placed with a foster family who can provide the best possible home for that child. When a child is placed, there is a mutual responsibility and concern between the agency and family for that child's welfare. The foster family provides for and is accountable for the child's day-to-day care. Children's Aid Society is accountable for the long term placement of the child and acts as a liaison between foster child and parents. The placing agency and Children's Aid Society will make every effort to inform a family with all available knowledge about a child prior to placement. Background information regarding a child is confidential and should not be shared with relatives, friends, or others, except as deemed necessary or helpful by Children's Aid Society staff and the foster family. Cases in which information would be beneficial to the child's welfare might include, but not limited to: schools, ministers, counselors, etc.

Foster care demands honesty and mutual confidence in each other and working together on the part of the child, the foster parents, and the agency.

1. When a foster home has been selected for a child, Children's Aid Society staff will call the family, provide information regarding the age, sex, and situation of the child, and schedule an interview with the placing agency to talk further about the child. In the case of an emergency or an infant coming from the hospital, the appointment will be omitted.
2. A conference with the placing agency provides an opportunity to learn about the child and review expectations and procedures. If possible, a pre-placement visit or visits will be planned so that the foster family and the child may become acquainted.
3. The foster family may be asked in rare instances to permit the biological parent to accompany Children's Aid Society staff to the foster family's home to take part in the pre-placement visit.
4. At an appointed time determined by the placing agency, the placement will be made.

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5. At placement, the foster family and Children's Aid Society staff will sign a placement agreement. The foster family will receive a copy of the placement agreement, information regarding a plan for medical care and payment, and a copy of the child's medical record, which the foster family will keep updated.
6. Children's Aid Society staff will give the foster family an emergency telephone number, which provides 24-hour access to staff.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Foster Child Health Care Requirements
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.51, Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Children in foster care receive medical assistance and have an Access Card, which is given to the foster family to be used for the child's medical, dental, and eye appointments, care and products (such as glasses, medications, etc.), as well as mental health appointments, such as counseling, psychiatry, etc. There is no co-pay for children who receive medical assistance. Medical assistance cards can take up to two months to obtain after application. In situations where the child's medical assistance card has not been received, the foster parent(s) should not pay for prescriptions and doctors' fees. The foster parent(s) should request that the bill be held, pending the receipt of the medical assistance card. If a bill is being held, foster parent(s) should notify Children's Aid Society. All medical services are eligible for payment from the date the application is filed for a medical assistance card.

Family physicians can be used, but if the doctor does not accept medical assistance, then the foster family must pay expenses out of the per diem rate.

A foster child shall have:

1. A medical appraisal by a licensed physician within 60 days of initial placement in foster care unless the child has had one within the previous 90 days and the results of the appraisal are available. The appraisal shall include: a review of the child's health history, physical examination of the child, and laboratory or diagnostic tests as indicated by the examining physician, including those required to detect communicable disease.
2. Immediate medical attention when a medical problem is recognized at the time of referral.
3. A medical appraisal with a licensed physician according to the following schedule:

a. Birth through six months	Once every six weeks
b. Seven months through 23 months	Once every three months
c. Twenty-three months and older	Once every year
4. An appropriate immunization schedule established based on his/her immunization status.
5. Necessary medical care when he/she is ill.
6. A dental appraisal, for children three years of age and older, by a licensed dentist within 60 days of initial placement unless the child has had one within the previous six months and the results of the appraisal are available. The appraisal shall include: taking or reviewing the child's dental history, examination of the hard and soft tissue of the oral cavity, and x-rays for diagnostic purposes, if deemed necessary by the dentist.
7. Children's Aid Society must have written documentation in the child's file that the child received medical/dental care. Agency forms must be completed by the physician/dentist. The foster parent(s) should obtain these forms from Children's Aid Society staff **prior** to the child's appointment and forward the completed forms to the agency.

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8. A continuing medical record, which includes past and current records, given to the child's ongoing source of child care.

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Policy Name:	Foster Child Files
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

The child's record should contain the following information:

1. Child's name, sex, date of birth
2. Name, address, and phone number of biological parents and emergency contacts, if needed
3. Name and address of placing agency
4. Date accepted for service and date service was terminated
5. Notation that the grievance procedure was explained to the child
6. Authorization signed by the placing agency to provide services to child and family
7. Family Service Plan (FSP) information as provided by the placing agency
8. Educational reports and records
9. The Individual Service Plan (ISP) and reports relating to services activity
10. The emergency placement plan, if applicable
11. Medical and dental records
12. Necessary signed consent forms

Children's Aid Society staff shall request the following information from the placing agency before placing a child in a foster home:

1. Information on child: educational, medical, and mental health histories and records
2. Birth certificate of child
3. Social security number of child
4. Court order placing child into care
5. Authorization form for Children's Aid Society to provide care for the child
6. Consent for medical and dental care
7. Consent for mental health treatment
8. Visitation schedules between child and biological parents
9. Family service plans, child permanency plans
10. Name and address of child's biological parents
11. Information on child's biological parents: medical, mental health, education
12. Schedule of court dates and visitations

The foster child's record will be stored in a locked file cabinet at Children's Aid Society. The original child records are the property of the agency whose responsibility it is to secure the information against loss, defacement, tampering, or use by unauthorized persons.

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Policy Name:	Foster Child's Rights
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Religion

A child has the right to participate in religious activities, services, and counseling, taking into account choices specified by the biological parents or guardian of the child. If a request is made at the time of placement, it is the responsibility of the foster family to comply with the guidelines established. Children's Aid Society staff will monitor the child's participation at each scheduled visit to ensure that their request is being met.

Education

Children shall be enrolled in, or have access to, education. The foster parent(s) may not sign paperwork regarding the child's educational rights, such as for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In lieu of a biological parent's signature, a county caseworker's signature is necessary as he/she represents the county children and youth agency as the educational guardian.

If a child receiving services is beyond the age of compulsory school attendance, the child shall have an opportunity to obtain career counseling or continuing education.

During scheduled visits, Children's Aid Society staff will monitor the child's attendance at school. If needed, staff will contact the school directly to request the child's attendance record or other information.

Telephone

Children have the right to access to the telephone for local calls in the foster family home. This right can be negotiated on an "as needed" basis between the foster parent(s) and foster child. During scheduled visits, Children's Aid Society staff will ensure that the foster child has access to the telephone and that each party is satisfied with the negotiation.

If the placing agency requests the foster child have contact with their birth parents by telephone, the placing agency will ensure the foster parents have a schedule of when contact is to occur. Children's Aid Society staff will monitor telephone contacts between birth parents and the foster child during scheduled visits.

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Policy Name:	Family Service Plan and Child Permanency Plan
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	4/8/2013
Effective Date:	4/8/2013
Date(s) of Revision:	
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

It is the foster family's responsibility to follow the requirements of the Family Service Plan (FSP) and Child Permanency Plan (CPP) developed by the placing county children and youth agency that has custody of the child. Children's Aid Society staff will monitor compliance at regular visits.

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Policy Name:	Visits/Contacts with Children's Aid Society
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	

Children's Aid Society staff will schedule visits with the foster family and child two times per month. Children's Aid Society reserves the right to conduct more frequent or unannounced visits with the foster family and foster child as needed. During each visit, Children's Aid Society staff will discuss the child's medical, educational, behavioral, developmental, and mental health changes since the last visit. Children's Aid Society staff will also discuss the child's adjustment to the family, and will request dates for visitations, court hearings, or any recent activity concerning the foster child.

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Policy Name:	Birth Family Contact
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Regardless of the reason for placement, the child's biological parents are important people. The child may have severe conflict in his or her loyalties divided between the foster parent(s) and the biological parents. The child may have been hurt and is afraid to trust the foster parent(s) or he/she may be very defensive of the biological parents.

All contacts between the biological parents and the foster child are the responsibility of the placing agency unless otherwise specifically arranged with the foster family by Children's Aid Society.

1. Procedures for telephone calls to or from biological parents are determined by the placing agency.
2. Any visits with biological parents in the foster home are to be prearranged appointments between the placing agency and the foster parents.
3. If regular family visits are deemed appropriate by the placing agency, the rights of the foster child to maintain contact with the biological family must be respected and visits should never be regarded as either rewards or punishments.

*The above policy is a guideline; each case is different. Family contacts are always considered on an individual basis.

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Policy Name:	Release of Information
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	

The original foster child records are the property of the agency whose responsibility it is to secure the information against loss, defacement, tampering, or use by unauthorized persons. This agency may be one other than Children's Aid Society. The original records will be removed from the facility's jurisdiction and safekeeping only in accordance with court order, subpoena, or statute. Records will be kept locked when unattended.

The information contained in the record may be disclosed, upon request to:

1. A foster child's parents or legal guardian;
2. A foster child's or parent(s') attorney;
3. A court and court services, probation staff or placing agency staff;
4. Authorized agents of the Department; or
5. The foster child or former foster child, if 18 years of age or older.

In rare instances, information contained in the foster child's record may be released to volunteers and to their providers of services. Only that information needed by the service provider to carry out its responsibilities is to be released. The decision to release information is based on an assessment of the individual case record and the responsibilities of a service provider. Information released may include part or all of the case record.

Information contained in agency files, which were originally obtained from providers of medical or mental health care including, but not limited to: physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists may not be released if restriction on such release is imposed by the originating agency or professional. Such restrictions are usually noted by a stamped mark indicating that such information is confidential and is not to be released further without the expressed written consent of the party. To ensure that the confidential nature of the information contained in such documents and reports is maintained, Children's Aid Society staff is to refer the person, or agency requesting such information to the original provider.

Information contained in the foster child's record may be used for teaching or research purposes at the discretion of Children's Aid Society. Information used for teaching or research may not include names or other information, which might identify, directly or indirectly, persons receiving services from the agency. Requests from persons not employed by the agency who wish to conduct research using client records must be approved or disapproved in writing by the agency.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Clean Indoor Air Act
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	4/8/2013
Effective Date:	4/8/2013
Date(s) of Revision:	
References:	Clean Indoor Air Act Compliance Agreement

Foster parents must adhere to the following policy concerning smoking around foster children:

1. No smoking by anyone, *including the foster child*, inside the foster home while the foster child is in the home;
2. No smoking by anyone, *including the foster child*, in the vehicle while the foster child is in the vehicle;
3. No smoking by anyone, *including the foster child*, in a detached building located on the foster home property while the foster child is in the detached building;
4. Prominently displaying a 'no smoking' sign on the foster home's main living level;
5. No providing of tobacco products to underage children or adolescents; and
6. If smoking outside, not standing near an open window or doorway.

A first-time violation will result in a written warning. The Clean Indoor Air Act will be reviewed with the foster parents and a statement will be signed including a description of the violation and the foster parents' understanding of the Act. Any further violation may result in the removal of the foster child from the home. Non-compliance may result in an investigation by the Department of Health, and any penalties they impose.

During the application process, foster parents will sign a form stating they have read and agree to the Clean Indoor Air Act.

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Policy Name:	Confidentiality
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Foster parents become a member of the Children's Aid Society team providing services to foster children. Foster parents, as authorized agents of the agency, are governed by all agency policies, procedures, and regulations. Information will be shared with foster parents that is necessary to care for the foster child: i.e. a foster child's family case history and the reason that the child was removed from the home. During the course of care, the foster child may also share personal information about his/her family life. Foster parents must understand the need for confidentiality. This information is confidential and cannot be discussed with extended family members or friends. The information that foster parents receive as a foster parent can only be discussed with the foster child's caseworker, supervisor, or other agency personnel. With prior agency consent, confidential information may also be shared with other professionals who may need such information in order to effectively work with the family. Confidential information includes the foster child's parents' names, residence, activities, and case histories. Discussing with neighbors, friends, or relatives the confidential information given by the agency or foster child could jeopardize the foster family's status as an approved foster family.

When a foster child is involved in an activity, which might reach the media, i.e. picture in a newspaper story, the agency must be notified prior to the event. The agency will then obtain parental consent. A foster child may not be identified as such in any media: newspaper, magazine, radio, television, or the Internet.

With the Internet and the expansion of electronic communication, foster parents need to exercise extreme caution regarding the foster child while on the Internet. There should be no reference to the foster parent as a "foster parent", nor any identification of the foster child in the family as a "foster child". No pictures of the foster child, his/her name, stories about him/her, or any references to meetings, court, his/her case status, etc., may appear on Internet venues, including, but not limited to, email, blogs, webpages, and/or Facebook.

As the dangers and risks of social media expand, it is extremely important that foster parents are mindful of a foster child using social media and the Internet. It would be recommended that parental controls be put in place. A foster parent should monitor and supervise Internet, social media, and cell phone use. As it is important to keep a child safe while also providing them with some semblance of normalcy, it is advised that a foster parent uses their best judgement in these matters.

It is also important to discuss the possible safety risks and pitfalls of using social media with foster children. Foster parents should be having regular conversations with foster children regarding the risks of a child posting information and pictures on social media.

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At any time a foster parent feels that a foster child's social media use is a danger or risk to the child's safety and well-being, the foster parent should discuss their concerns with the caseworker. The foster parent has the right to limit, restrict, or monitor social media or Internet use until talking to the caseworker.

If a foster parent suspects that a foster child's confidentiality has been compromised, they will contact the caseworker.

Foster parents need to be prepared to deal with normal curiosity and prying regarding the background of their foster child. This will require some tact. Foster parents should explain that there are problems in the family, without being specific. Also, foster parents should help the foster child to know what he/she can safely say about him/herself and what he/she can say that will help him/her get along with his/her friends.

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Procedure Name:	Discipline
Procedure Location:	s:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.63, Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Foster parents must adhere to the following policy when disciplining foster children:

1. Praise and encouragement are to be used freely as a means of redirecting inappropriate behavior and promoting compliance.
2. Abusive or degrading practices, which are not acceptable discipline methods, include:
 - a. Ridicule, verbal abuse or threats, or derogatory or humiliating remarks about the foster child or biological parents.
 - b. Physical punishment inflicted upon the body.
 - c. Punishment for bed wetting or actions related to toilet training.
 - d. Denial of food, water, shelter, sufficient sleep, clothing, or bedding.
 - e. Denial of elements of the Child Service Plan (CSP) or Family Service (FSP).
 - f. Denial of communication with or visiting by or with the birth family, if included in the Individual Service Plan (ISP).
 - g. Assignment of physically strenuous exercise or work solely as punishment.
 - h. Requiring a foster child to remain silent for long periods of time.
 - i. Group punishment for the misbehavior of an individual child.
 - j. Delegation of discipline to persons not known by the foster child.
 - k. Denial of permission to talk to Children's Aid Society staff.

Use of Restraints and Seclusion

Children's Aid Society does not condone nor employ any means or method of physical restraint, isolation, security or physical barriers, which prohibit a child's egress from a building. Locks may be used only as a means of external security to keep persons out.

1. No mechanical or chemical restraints are to be used on a foster child as a means of punishment or for the convenience of foster parents.
2. The use of seclusion, defined as placing the foster child in a locked room, is not acceptable under any condition.
3. Use of physical force, corporal punishment, or verbal abuse is never to be employed by foster parents. Any foster parent violating these policies will be terminated immediately.

Use of Exclusion

Exclusion, defined as removing a child from his/her immediate environment and restricting him/her to another area for the purpose of protecting the child or others:

- a. Should only occur when it has been documented (in writing) by Children's Aid Society staff in his/her monthly report that other, less restrictive methods have been unsuccessful in controlling the unacceptable behavior.
- b. Should only occur in an area where there is a window at eye level.

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- c. Should not be used for any longer than 15 minutes at a time.
- a. Should not occur for more than 30 minutes within any one-hour period.

During scheduled visits, Children's Aid Society staff will review with foster parent(s) and child the discipline techniques that were used with the child over the last two weeks.

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Policy Name:	Reimbursement
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Pending Approval

Foster parents are paid by the agency at a daily rate per child for room, board, and supervision determined annually by each contracted county. The per diem received by the foster parent is expected to provide for food, shelter, and on-going clothing needs for the child. The foster parent payroll of the preceding month is submitted to the fiscal manager at the beginning of each month. Checks are processed and mailed out by the fiscal manager. They are generally mailed prior to the 20th of the month following.

Mileage

1. All reimbursed expenses must be submitted on a Children's Aid Society Mileage Log.
2. The agency will reimburse transportation to foster parents for certain trips at the current rate per mile, including:
 - a. Visits to doctors, dentists, optometrists, hospitals, and counseling
 - b. Visits with the child's biological parents or siblings

Non-reimbursable travel

1. Trips to athletic, social, religious, and recreational events
2. Trips to school, shopping, camping, etc.
3. Pre-placement visits

Clothes

Children's Aid Society reimburses foster parents for clothing only after the county pays Children's Aid Society. Counties will issue payment after they receive an invoice and supporting receipts from the purchase of the clothing. Clothing reimbursements are included with the monthly per diem checks and are typically issued prior to the 20th of the month following.

Respite Care Policy

When a foster child respites in another foster home, Children's Aid Society will pay both foster families during the period of respite.

Vacation Policy

If foster parents request that a foster child be placed in another foster home due to vacation plans, then Children's Aid Society will suspend the per diem to the foster parents during the time that the foster child is in another placement situation.

The per diem received by the foster parents does not have to be claimed as income for tax purposes. **Foster parents should contact a tax preparer for further questions.**

All foster children are eligible for the school free lunch program. Each school district has the form that is required to enroll the foster child. Foster parents will need to complete and sign these

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forms at the beginning of each school year. It often takes one to two weeks for the child to be enrolled in the free lunch program. Foster parents will need to pack or purchase a school lunch for the foster child during this time.

Foster children under the age of five are often eligible for the WIC program. WIC provides infant formula, cereal, milk, and cheese in the form of vouchers redeemable at the grocery store of the foster parents' choice. Foster parents should contact the local WIC office as soon as possible following the placement and make an appointment for the foster child. A letter is required from the placing agency that verifies the foster child is in agency custody and is placed in foster care.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Transportation
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

All foster children must be transported in a validly licensed and inspected motor vehicle. Foster parents and staff must possess a valid driver's license for the class of vehicle being operated, ensure that the vehicle has the minimum insurance required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as well as a current Pennsylvania registration and inspection. At the time of application, foster parents will submit a copy of their driver's license, automobile insurance, registration, and date their vehicle was inspected. Foster parents will update that information during their annual reevaluation.

Staff will also provide Children's Aid Society with a copy of their driver's license, automobile insurance, registration, and date of inspection upon hire. They will update their information during their annual performance evaluation.

Foster parents and staff shall also ensure the following when foster children are transported on behalf of Children's Aid Society:

1. The number of persons in a vehicle may not exceed the maximum capacity as determined by the vehicle manufacturer.
2. Safety restraints, as installed at the time of manufacturing, shall be used by all occupants.
3. Children who are younger than eight years of age shall be transported in car seats as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
4. Operators shall not be under the influence of alcohol or using medication that would affect their mental or motor abilities.

Foster parents are expected to provide transportation to medical, dental, and mental health appointments and to visits with the biological parents. Mileage for approved transportation is reimbursed to foster parents. If the foster parents are unable to provide transportation, Children's Aid Society staff may be available to assist as needed.

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Policy Name:	Travel
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Prior to taking a foster child on any travel out of state, Children's Aid Society staff, the placing agency, and birth parent(s) must be made aware of the travel arrangements. Foster families must notify Children's Aid Society staff if they are taking the foster child away from the residence on any trip longer than one day. The birth parent/child visitation schedule must be taken into consideration. If visits are missed, it is the responsibility of all involved to see the visits are made up ahead of time or as soon after as possible.

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Policy Name:	Supervision
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	

Foster families are responsible for the proper supervision of the foster child living in their home. The foster child is expected to cooperate by always letting the foster family know where he/she is going and when he/she will return. The foster child may not leave the foster home without permission. At the time of placement, Children's Aid Society staff will explain this requirement to the foster child.

If foster families are away from the home, they must arrange for responsible supervision while they are absent. Children's Aid Society expects foster parents to exercise sound judgment in choosing a caretaker. It is important that any caretaker be responsible and able to meet the individual foster child's needs. The caretaker must be made aware of the agency policy regarding discipline. The foster parents must be reasonably sure that the caretaker left in charge will be able to deal with the children given the number of children to be cared for (the greater the number of children lessens the amount of individual attention and supervision that can be provided) and the age range of the children (frequency of conflict is likely to increase between children who are close in age).

Foster children are permitted to babysit or supervise other children. The decision should be made by the foster parents based on the foster child's maturity level and ability to handle responsibility, unless determined otherwise by the placing agency.

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Policy Name:	Runaway
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	
Effective Date:	
Date(s) of Revision:	4/3/2017
References:	

In the event a foster child has left the foster home without the foster parent's permission or is not home when expected, and a reasonable period of time has elapsed, the police should be called. The foster parent should call the police department that has jurisdiction in his/her area of residence. The foster parent should identify him/herself as a foster parent reporting a foster child who is missing. In some cases, a police officer will be sent to the foster home to obtain additional information. The foster parent should be prepared to give the police the foster child's name, date of birth, description, type of clothing the foster child was wearing, and any ideas as to where the foster child may have run to. The foster parent should immediately notify Children's Aid Society staff that the foster child is missing. If it is not during regular office hours, the on-call number should be called.

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Policy Name:	Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	
Effective Date:	
Date(s) of Revision:	4/3/2017
References:	The Activities and Experiences for Children in Out-of-Home Placements Act (Act 75 of 2015), Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (HR 4980)

Framework

Foster parents and other caregivers in out-of-home placement settings have the responsibility of making day-to-day decisions related to “normal” activities regarding the foster child in their care without prior approval from Children’s Aid Society, the placing agency, or the court, provided that the foster parents’ decision is based on a “reasonable and prudent parental standard”.

Purpose of the Standard

To empower foster parents to utilize careful and sensible parental decisions, that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a foster child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the foster child, when determining whether to allow a foster child to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

Background

The federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (HR 4980), signed into law on September 29, 2014, amends titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act by protecting children and youth at risk of sex trafficking, improving adoption incentives, and extending Family Connection Grants, and improving international child support recovery. It includes new requirements related to reasonable and prudent parent standards for foster families and congregate care providers.

In order to implement HR 4980 in Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf signed HB 477, PN 2543 into law on December 10, 2015. HB 477 became Act 75 of 2015. It is called the Activities and Experiences for Children in Out-of-Home Placements Act.

Act 75 requires that the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF), as a condition of licensure for private foster family care agencies, review standards and training related to the reasonable and prudent parent standard. OCYF must also verify, at yearly licensure reviews, that Children’s Aid Society has promoted the ability of a foster child to participate in age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate activities and experiences and has developed/utilized a training curriculum addressing the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard that meets the requirements of the template developed by OCYF.

Children’s Aid Society has adopted the following operational protocol to support implementation of both Pennsylvania and federal laws addressing normalcy for children in out-of-home care and to comply with expectations for licensure of programs. Children’s Aid Society believes that compliance with both the intent and appropriate application of the Reasonable Prudent Parent

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Standard in day-to-day decision making for foster children entrusted to our care is best achieved by utilizing this protocol as guidance as a component of Children's Aid Society's operational framework.

Children's Aid Society has adopted the Juvenile Law Center definition of normalcy as referring to "age and developmentally-appropriate activities and experiences that allow children and youth to grow. Normalcy for youth means being able to do what is considered "routine" for many teenagers: participate in sports, teams, and clubs; attend choir and dance classes; volunteer; and spend time with friends, have sleepovers, and take trips.

Children's Aid Society supports application of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a foster child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the foster child. Act 75 clearly allows designated foster parent caregivers to make certain decisions regarding children in their care. Children's Aid Society acknowledges that the identified foster parents within the organizational structure must be empowered to exercise this standard as it is intended since Act 75 clearly allows foster parents to make certain decisions, without prior approval, regarding foster children in their care.

However, Children's Aid Society also recognizes that such decisions must respect the provisions and limitations imposed by court orders and service plans for the foster child as well as specific limitations imposed by county contracts. "Without prior approval" does not mean that the placing agencies, and at times, the court, do not need to be made aware and notified of some activities or experiences, particularly when the foster child will be traveling out of state, or spending more than 24 hours with someone other than the foster parent(s). While biological parental input is valued and solicited, it is not the controlling factor in decisions made for the foster child. And while the foster child's wishes are solicited and considered, they are also not the determining factor controlling the decisions made.

Foster parents have the responsibility for making decisions related to "normal" activities for children in out-of-home care settings. This decision making responsibility has been incorporated into the Children's Aid Society agreement signed with foster families acting the capacity as caregiver. To ensure compliance with the law and minimize foster parent and agency liability, foster parents must:

- Complete the required initial training relating to the reasonable and prudent parent standard prior to placement of a foster child in their care;
- Make a good faith effort to apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard in approving an activity or experience for the foster child and;
- Must ensure that their decisions are not in conflict with any applicable court order or service plan.

Agency protocol supports providing copies of the court order and service plans to the foster parents for ease in review and reference.

Evidence of training on the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard will be kept in Children's Aid Society foster families' training files and will be made available during agency licensure

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reviews. To ensure that training provided by Children's Aid Society meets the template requirements as outlined by OCYF, our agency has elected to use the curriculum of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center.

To support appropriate foster parent application of the standard as well as the desired levels of normalcy of access and opportunity for experiences, casework and supervisory staff within Children's Aid Society are also expected to participate in training on the provisions of both the federal and state laws. Children's Aid Society believes this to be best practice as of the date of implementation of the Pennsylvania Act 75 of 2015, as part of new employee orientation. Children's Aid Society also supports a more informal level of training for staff on an annual basis as a refresher of the provisions of the Act as well as an opportunity to share experiences related to application of the standard with colleagues.

While ongoing/annual training for foster parents is not required in Act 75, it is the adopted practice of Children's Aid Society to review the provisions of the law as well as agency protocols and expectations with foster families acting as caregivers on a yearly basis as part of the annual foster home certification process as a refresher to ensure compliance with the intent of the Act. While this review is not necessarily a formal training session, it is expected that it be child specific, reflecting the written documented experiences of the child(ren) placed in the home.

Foster families within Children's Aid Society are supported in considering a range of factors when determining whether to allow a child in out-of-home care under county children and youth jurisdiction to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is to be individually applied to each foster child with consideration of:

- The foster child's age, maturity and developmental level to maintain the overall health and safety of the foster child.
- The potential risk factors to the foster child or to others and the appropriateness of the extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, or social activity or experience.
- The best interest of the foster child, based on information known by the foster parent.
- The importance of encouraging the foster child's emotional and developmental growth.
- The importance of supporting the foster child in developing skills to successfully transition to adulthood.
- The importance of providing the foster child with the most family-like living experience possible.
- Any special needs or accommodations that the foster child may need to safely participate in the activity or experience.

Again, parental input reflected in case plan documents or communicated in writing to Children's Aid Society is not the controlling factor in decisions made for the foster child. And while the foster child's wishes are solicited and considered during the care planning process as well as in day-to-day activity and schedule planning discussions with the foster child, they are also not the determining factor controlling the decisions made.

Children's Aid Society supports application of the Reasonable and Prudent Standard provisions

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to all children entrusted to our care regardless of their age, or intellectual or physical disabilities. Act 75 defines age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate as the following:

- Activities or items that are generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child, based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioral capabilities that are typical for an age or age group; and
- In the case of a specific child, activities or items that are suitable for the child based on the developmental stages attained by the child with respect to the cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioral capacities of the child.

Children's Aid Society reinforces this expectation through training provided to foster parents and staff as well as documentation of access and opportunities available to each child in care.

The federal and state laws do not address the need for securing background clearances for other individuals who may be providing time limited care for a foster child covered by the provisions of this Act. Children's Aid Society believes that normal decision-making for appropriate substitute care providers for a child – babysitter, grandparent, relative, friends providing transportation, or group activity supervision, neighbors hosting a sleepover, etc. – should be based on a reasonable and prudent judgement related to the suitability and familiarity of the individual in question. It is the policy of Children's Aid Society to empower the foster parents to exercise judgement in this area in much the same manner as they would for other decisions concerning the overall safety and well-being of the foster child – Is the individual known to the foster child? Are they reputable and reliable? Are they aware of and willing to attend to any special needs of the foster child? Is the activity supported by their involvement, one which the foster child is initiating or displaying interest in participating? Are there any court orders addressing contact or restrictions for contact with this person recorded in any service plan?

If there are no prohibitions documented or reasons for concerns for the foster child's safety and care, Children's Aid Society believes that normalcy for a foster child is best supported by encouraging the foster parent to make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions related to time limited substitute care by others that they believe supports quality cultural, enrichment, extracurricular, and social opportunities for a foster child. Children's Aid Society also acknowledges that some counties have imposed restrictions on this practice in contract provisions and require that background clearance certifications be obtained before allowing a foster child to be in their unsupervised care, which may need to be considered in relation to certain foster child placements.

Children's Aid Society

Procedure Name:	Money and Personal Possessions/Ownership
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Money

1. Money earned, received as a gift, or received as allowance by a foster child is the foster child's personal property.
2. Foster children may receive an allowance from their foster parents. The amount should be kept in line with what is typical for the family.
3. A separate bank account should be maintained for the money of children in placement. Interest earned on a foster child's money shall be applied to the foster child's account. Money in a foster child's account shall be returned to the foster child when the child leaves placement. If a bank account is not established for a foster child prior to placement in foster care, it is the foster parents' responsibility to establish one for them. Foster parents and Children's Aid Society staff are responsible for monitoring the foster child's bank account.

Personal Possessions/Ownership

Foster children have the right to receive, purchase, have, and use personal property. The foster child retains ownership of any clothing or personal effects he/she brings with him/her or any items purchased for him/her by Children's Aid Society, the placing agency, or foster family. Either the placing agency or Children's Aid Society will retain an inventory of the foster child's possessions. The placing agency will determine who keeps the inventory.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Hunting and the Use of Firearms
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Hunting and the Use of Firearms

Foster children often wish to participate in the sport of hunting while in foster care placement, but this can be quite dangerous. Accidents can happen anywhere and safeguards are especially important when caring for other people's children.

Firearms:

1. Foster children are not permitted to have their own rifles, shotguns, or other weapons at the foster home.
2. No foster child may use firearms without verification that they have successfully completed the hunter safety course.
3. Foster children are prohibited from access to, or use of, firearms, except as directly supervised by the foster parent or other responsible adult over the age of 21.
4. All firearms and ammunition must be kept in locked, separate areas inaccessible to any foster children.

Hunting:

1. All foster children must have successfully completed a hunter safety course prior to applying for a hunting license. A copy of the course certificate must be given to Children's Aid Society staff to place in the foster child's records.
2. While hunting, foster children must be accompanied by the foster parent or other responsible adult over the age of 21.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Driving Permits and License
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Children in foster care are permitted to get their driving permit and license according to the following procedure:

1. All foster children must first complete the Driver's Education Theory course before obtaining their driving permit.
2. A copy of the learner's permit and/or license shall be provided to Children's Aid Society.
3. A copy of the foster parent(s') insurance covering the child must be provided to Children's Aid Society before the child may operate a vehicle.
4. The foster child may not drive passengers other than those approved by the foster family.
5. Driving violations must be reported to Children's Aid Society staff within 24 hours.

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Policy Name:	Dating and Curfew Guidelines
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Children in foster care are permitted to date. The age at which the child is able to begin dating will be set by the foster parents.

Curfew for foster children is dependent upon their age. It will be set at the discretion of the foster parents. Curfews may be extended for special situations with permission from Children's Aid Society staff.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Illegal Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Foster children are prohibited to use illegal drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. Foster children may not use any paraphernalia associated with the use of drugs. Any experimentation or use must be reported to Children's Aid Society staff immediately.

Foster parents may use tobacco according to the Clean Indoor Air Act policy and may consume alcohol socially, not to cause the foster parent's blood alcohol level to exceed the legal limit.

Foster parents are prohibited from using illegal drugs while caring for foster children.

Any violation of this policy may result in the removal of the foster child from the home. Non-compliance with this policy in its entirety may result in an investigation by Children's Aid Society and the Department of Health, and any penalties they impose.

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Policy Name:	Compensation for Work
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Foster children are to be paid according to Federal Wage and Hour Regulations for all work performed

EXCEPT:

1. Personal housekeeping tasks related directly to the foster child's personal space or possessions.
2. Shared responsibilities for regular household chores.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Respite Care
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Polices-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Respite is care provided by short term substitute foster parents or caregivers, where and when available. It allows the foster family a temporary relief from parenting responsibilities. Respite care is not to exceed three respite events in six months.

Children's Aid Society staff needs at least one-week notice to find a respite host.

Respite caregivers must meet the same qualifications as foster parents. Children's Aid Society or another qualified agency will approve caregivers as foster parents before they provide respite.

Foster parents must transport the foster child to the respite caregiver's home for a respite. Children's Aid Society will pay the respite caregivers during the period of respite according to the daily per diem rate determined by the contracted county. Respite caregivers will not be reimbursed mileage.

Vacation Policy

If foster parents request that a foster child be placed in another foster home due to vacation plans, then Children's Aid Society will suspend the per diem to the foster parents during the time that the foster child is in another placement situation.

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Policy Name:	Referral Sources
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Children's Aid Society staff provides foster care families and children with information, referral, and services that other area agencies offer.

When a need for a service presents itself, which cannot be provided through Children's Aid Society, the staff will make referrals to other service providers. The service providers, which may be available to the client include, but are not limited to:

1. County or private mental health centers
2. Local hospitals or medical services
3. Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
4. Society for Disabled Children and Adults or Easter Seals
5. County Board of Assistance
6. Social Security Administration
7. Pennsylvania State Health Center
8. County Juvenile Probation
9. Cen-Clear Child Services Head Start Program

In the event that the foster care family resides outside the boundaries of Clearfield County, the foster family will be referred to appropriate service organizations in their area.

Children's Aid Society

Procedure Name:	Emergency On-Call Procedure
Procedure Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013
References:	

Children's Aid Society staff is available at all times to talk with and assist foster parents caring for foster children.

Foster Parent Procedure:

1. Determine the nature of the call. All non-emergency calls should wait until normal business hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact Children's Aid Society staff at (814) 765-2686.
2. In case of an emergency, first determine if medical treatment is necessary. If medical treatment is necessary, seek treatment at the nearest hospital or medical facility. During normal business hours, notify Children's Aid Society staff at (814) 765-2686 of the emergency situation as soon as possible after locating treatment. After normal business hours, notify Children's Aid Society staff at (814) 762-6076.
3. For all other emergencies during normal business hours, notify Children's Aid Society staff at (814) 765-2686. After normal business hours, notify Children's Aid Society staff immediately at (814) 762-6076.
4. Please state your name, the foster child's name, the nature of the emergency, and the information or help you need at the immediate time.
5. In the event that you must evacuate your home due to a natural disaster, please contact your caseworker within 24 hours by phone or email to notify them of your location and the best way to reach you.

Children's Aid Society

Policy Name:	Termination and Relocation
Policy Location:	S:/adoption/Bulletins-Policies-Regulations
Date of Adoption:	7/1/2002
Effective Date:	7/1/2002
Date(s) of Revision:	4/8/2013; 4/3/2017
References:	PA Title 55, Chapter 3700.73, Pennsylvania's Manual For Foster Parents

Request to Leave Placement

A foster child may request to leave placement. Children's Aid Society staff will investigate the request and contact the placing agency to determine an appropriate resolution. If it is determined that it is in the foster child's best interests to leave placement, the placing agency will need a reasonable amount of time to arrange another placement. Children's Aid Society staff will document the request in the child's records as well as the final decision of the placing agency.

Termination of Placement

At times, it becomes necessary for a foster child to leave foster care services in a termination of placement. This can occur for several reasons. If the court system has returned custody of the foster child to the birth parent, then foster care placement is terminated. If voluntary placement is revoked by the birth parent, foster care placement is terminated. If a foster child's birth parent(s') rights are terminated, the foster child then is available for adoption. Foster care is terminated at the time of legal adoption.

Relocation of Placement

At times, it becomes necessary to change a foster child's placement. When a foster child is placed in a foster home, it is hoped that foster child will be able to remain for as long as foster care is needed. Children's Aid Society recognizes that this is not always possible.

At times, a foster family may feel unable to care for a foster child. Children's Aid Society requests that the foster family notifies staff at least 30 days in advance for relocation of a foster child. Sudden changes are damaging to children of any age and must be avoided if possible.

Occasionally, it is possible that a placement is not working out for a particular foster child. Children's Aid Society staff will provide support, direction, and suggestions to the foster parents. After those efforts have been made, sometimes it is still necessary to relocate a foster child.

If the placing agency or Children's Aid Society feels that a foster home is no longer in the best interests of a foster child, the foster child will be relocated.

Foster Parents Child Relocation Appeal

Foster parents have no legal right to any foster child in their care. Foster parents are part of a team working with the agency to provide temporary care for the foster child. Foster parents have the right to appeal certain circumstances.

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Foster parents have the right to appeal when they feel that the removal of the foster child is not in the foster child's best interest and when none of the following conditions apply:

- The foster child has been in the 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 court has ordered the child's removal.
- The child is being removed due to a report of alleged abuse against the foster parent(s).

Children's Aid Society will inform the foster parents in writing that they may appeal the removal of a foster child unless one or more of the conditions listed above apply at least 15 days prior to the removal of the foster child. A foster parent(s) who wishes to appeal the decision to remove a foster child will submit to Children's Aid Society a written appeal, post-marked no later than 15 calendar days after being informed of the foster child's removal and the ability to appeal the removal of the foster child.

There are no appeal rights when the court initiates the removal of the child. Appeal rights apply only when the foster child's removal is planned and initiated by Children's Aid Society or the placing agency.

Upon receipt of the foster parent appeal, the administrative assistant will date stamp the appeal and submit the appeal to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Post Office Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105 within five working days of the date stamp. The Office of Hearings and Appeals will schedule a hearing on the foster parent's behalf. The foster parent may be represented by an attorney or other representation. The Office of Hearing and Appeals will render a decision.

If the foster parent submits to Children's Aid Society a written appeal, post-marked no later than 15 calendar days after being informed of the foster child's removal and the ability to appeal the removal of the foster child and none of the conditions listed above apply, the foster child will remain in the foster home pending a decision on the appeal. Children's Aid Society's Complaint Procedures do not apply in this instance.