

When a child is placed with you...

**A guide for relatives
and kin caregivers**



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been developed to help with initial questions you may have when caring for a child who has been removed from their parents' care.

We encourage you to talk things over with the child's social worker whenever you have a question or something doesn't seem right.

If your child's social worker is not available, their supervisor can often help answer questions.

Why are my family/friends involved with Child Protective Services?

Child and Family Services (CFS) becomes involved in circumstances where children are unsafe. If a child is removed from their home, it is because it was no longer safe to remain there. This may be the result of a variety of different things, such as drug abuse that endangered the child, abandonment, lack of supervision, physical or sexual abuse or other safety reasons.

Why place the child in my home?

Although placing children into foster care is sometimes necessary, leaving home and adjusting to foster care is difficult for children. When children are placed with people they know, such as relatives and adults they are close to (kin), the difficulty in adjusting to foster care can be minimized. While being cared for by relatives or kin, the child is more likely to continue to maintain important connections to familiar people and places. Most of the time the child's parents also feel less stress and worry when their child is with family or kin. Relative placement is preferred for all foster children if they have relatives who are able to provide a safe place for the children to live.

Why do I need to become a licensed foster parent?

Being a child's foster parent is different than being an aunt, uncle, grandmother, or close friend. It means that you will be very involved with the child's social worker and our agency. There will be things you will be asked to do that may seem unnecessary; however, both federal and state law requires that anyone, including a relative, who cares for a child who is in state custody must have a foster care license. Being licensed involves completing an application, passing a criminal background check, completing foster parent training and having a home safety inspection.

At the time of placement, you should have received directions to complete an online Foster Care Application. If you did not, please call the child's social worker right away for instructions. It is important that you complete and submit the application as soon as possible. There will be a lot for you and the agency to do, and the goal is to have you completely licensed within the first

30 days following placement. If you do not follow through in becoming licensed according to the timeframes established between you and the child's social worker, the child may be moved to a licensed home.

Once licensed as a foster home, CFS can access funds specifically intended to reimburse foster homes for room and board according to the child's age and needs. This means you can receive a monthly payment for the care of the child after you are licensed.

How is the court involved in the child's life?

For the child who has been placed in CFS custody, the court must review the reasons for custody and approve continued placement shortly after a placement is made. This occurs at a shelter care hearing held within 48 hours after the child has been removed from the home (except for weekends and holidays). Following the shelter care hearing, an adjudicatory hearing will be held within 30 days where a judge will listen to all the evidence presented. If legal custody is given to CFS at the adjudicatory hearing, the case is periodically reviewed by the court while the child remains in care.

As the person caring for the child, you will be provided with notice of, and have the right to be heard in, any further hearings to be held with respect to the child. Foster children ages eight years of age or older will also receive notice of further hearings and have the right to be heard. 'Having the right to be heard' means that you and the child have the opportunity to testify either orally or in writing. It does not mean that you have a right to become a legal party to the case and have the right to present other witnesses or evidence. Because you are not considered a party to the case, the judge may decide there are parts of the hearing you should not be included in.

In most cases, children in foster care in Idaho are appointed a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) by the court. The GAL is usually a volunteer from the community who has an interest in supporting children in foster care and has volunteered with their local GAL program. Sometimes this volunteer is referred to as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA. The GAL will do an independent investigation into the circumstances of the child and make recommendations to the Court. The GAL is allowed to have contact with the child and should contact you to schedule time to meet with them.

Who makes decisions for the child?

A child's parents are still the parents even though the state has legal custody, and they should be involved as much as possible in saying what the child can and cannot do. The child's parents will be working with the child's social worker to develop a service plan. The plan will say what needs to be done, and who will do what.

The more the child's parents are involved in attending school meetings, helping the child to choose clothing and personal items, accompanying the child to medical and dental appointments, the more opportunities there are to observe the parent doing their job as a parent. Doing things for the parents does not help prepare the parent to take care of the child on their own.

There will be times you may need both the parents' and the agency's permission for routine things, such as non-emergency medical care, medications, and hair cuts.

How long will the child be in foster care?

CFS works to reunite children with their families as soon as possible, while at the same time, planning for a permanent home in case the child is not able to return home (you may hear the social worker refer to this as "concurrent planning"). The amount of time a child remains in foster care will depend on how quickly the child's parents can make changes in the circumstances that made it unsafe for the child to continue to live with them. Most children are reunified with their parents. If the child cannot go home, that usually means they will need a permanent home with you, another relative, or someone else. We will be working with you right from the beginning in the event that the child is not able to return home so their time in foster care is as short as possible.

What about contact between the child and their parents, brothers and sisters, and others?

When children are placed in foster care, they usually have planned visits with their parents. Additionally, they may have planned visits with their siblings who are not placed with them and with other relatives. Especially in the beginning, you cannot allow additional visits or unsupervised contact if the family's case plan does not allow it. As the child's foster parent you may be asked to assist with these visits. Talk with the child's social worker if you believe that the child should be having visits with someone important to the child. If a relative or friend contacts you directly about visitation, refer the person to the social worker and tell the social worker about the request. All visitation schedules and arrangements must be approved by CFS.

What about medical care?

Under no circumstances should a foster parent sign an consent for medical care. When children are placed into state custody, parents/legal guardians are asked to sign a consent form for medical services and you should be provided a copy of that consent. If you don't have a copy, contact the child's social worker to obtain one.

Children in state custody must have a medical exam within the first 30 days of being in foster care. Before you do anything, talk with the child's social worker to determine who will make the arrangements and which medical provider the child should see.

Most children in foster care will receive an Idaho Medicaid Card. You should be provided with the child's permanent Medical Card, or a temporary Medical Card or letter until the permanent Medical Card becomes available. The letter provides instructions on how a provider can receive both consent for treatment and payment.

What if we need to get help with an after-hours emergency?

Idaho has a Centralized Intake Unit in which a licensed social worker is available 24/7 to assist you in managing any after-hour emergencies related to a foster child. The number is for emergency use only, as foster parents are typically able to address most issues during regular business hours with the child(ren)'s assigned social worker.

Examples of after-hour emergencies include:

- Child needs immediate medical attention
- Child has run away
- Child has not returned from a visit with a parent/guardian

Central Intake After-Hours Emergency Number:

1-855-552-KIDS (5437)

What about school?

Foster children are required to attend public school. Home schooling is not permitted for children in state custody. Every effort should be made to keep a child in the same school they were attending prior to coming in to foster care. CFS is usually able to assist with the cost of transporting a child to school if additional travel is required. The child's social worker will inform you of what is known of the child's school experience, their educational strengths and needs. If a decision is made with the social worker to enroll the child into a new school, the social worker will work with you to insure that enrollment is completed and all paperwork is transferred.

What about the child's clothing and personal items?

Every effort will be made to ensure that a child has items they need and are familiar with. Many times, they bring items with them at the time of removal or arrangements may be made to pick up needed items shortly thereafter.

You will need to let the child's social worker know when the child needs additional clothing. When needed, the agency can provide a voucher to make the necessary clothing purchases. Vouchers can only be used at certain stores and only to purchase clothing items for the child whose name is on the voucher. Clothing purchased for the child belong to the child and should remain in the child's possession during the remainder of their stay in foster care, through any moves to a different foster home, and when the child returns home.

What about supervision and discipline?

Like all children, the amount of supervision a child requires depends on individual needs, age, history of behavior, emotional maturity, and impulse control. Some foster children require more structure and attention than others. Some may have safety plans where part of the safety plan includes extra monitoring of the child.

CFS does not allow the use of corporal (physical) punishment with children in foster care. Some examples of corporal punishment are spanking, slapping, pinching, shaking, forced uncomfortable positions and hitting. The child's social worker will review the CFS Discipline Standard with you and you must agree to follow it if the child is to remain in your home.

What about babysitting and child care?

Any arrangements for babysitting or child care for a child in state custody must be approved in advance by the child's social worker, unless the care is being provided by a licensed childcare facility. Even then, it is important to have prior approval if you think you will need reimbursement or payment. If you are employed outside of the home, work with the child's social worker to obtain approval and payment for child care through the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP). At no time should the child be supervised by another child under the age of 18 without prior knowledge and approval of the child's social worker.

What about recreational activities and driving?

Each child has unique abilities, interests, experiences and behaviors which should be taken into account when considering activities they are permitted to participate in while in foster care. What you may consider a low-risk activity, including school sponsored activities, might be considered unsafe and should be a shared decision between you, the child's parent(s), and the social worker. Talk to the child's social worker to obtain more information on what activities are considered safe and what activities are considered high risk and may require prior approval.

Although you may not sign for a child's driver's license or permit without written authorization from the CFS Program Manager, the child's parent(s) or legal guardian may authorize driver's training, provide payment, and sign for driver's licenses and permits. If you plan on allowing the youth to drive your car, the youth must be on your insurance and CFS will not pay any additional costs which result.

What can I talk about to others?

CFS will gather a lot of information about you, your family, the child and the child's parents. This information is confidential and may be shared only on a "need to know" basis. As a foster parent, you can expect the child's social worker to share with you the information you need to meet the child's needs. This information is shared with you because you "need to know."

This information is confidential and should not be shared with others unless specific information is necessary for the care, treatment or supervision of the child. The people who need to know certain information about the child include the child's doctor, dentist, counselor or child care provider. Providing information to others who are curious about what is happening is gossip, is disrespectful to the child and your family and should not occur.

There are some things you can do as a foster parent to help maintain the confidentiality of the child in your home and their families. They include:

- ◆ Do not identify a child as a foster child. For example, you could say, "I am Susan's grandmother and she is living with us right now," without mentioning that Susan is in foster care.
- ◆ Do not share background information about the child abuse/neglect or the child's family with your relatives, friends, or neighbors.
- ◆ Talk to your own children about the importance of the child's privacy and confidentiality.
- ◆ Talk to the child's social worker if you have questions about what information can be shared and with whom.

Social Worker Name: _____

Social Worker Number: _____

Supervisor Name: _____

Supervisor Number: _____



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