

Kemmerer Village

Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

2024



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Part II. Narrative of Foster parent Rights [20 ILCS 520/1-15]

A foster parent's rights include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.

All efforts and activities related to foster care and the child welfare delivery system are conducted to ensure that all members of the team are treated with mutual respect, dignity, and consideration. Foster parents are participating members of the Kemmerer Village (KV) child welfare team, and an attitude of cooperation and collaboration exists and is expected among all team members. Caseworkers, supervisors, support workers, and the Director of Community Operations are all available to foster parents and strive to maintain effective and professional relationships.

Foster parents are valued child welfare team members. As such, foster parents are encouraged to participate in Administrative Case Reviews, court hearings, Child & Family Team Meetings, have input into CIPP (Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation) meetings and Clinical Staffings, and are included in plans for delivery of services to children in their care. Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities are discussed with foster parents and included in monthly Foster Parent Support Groups. Information regarding accessibility of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, including availability online, via email, or a hard copy if requested, is provided by the caseworker or support worker assigned to children in the home. A copy of the plan remains available in the Kemmerer Village lobby, on the Kemmerer Village website, and upon request. Additionally, Rights and Responsibilities are shared in the (private) KV Foster Care Facebook group, and members are reminded how to access the Implementation Plan and/or how to seek more information or to provide feedback or comment.

Office phone numbers are provided to foster parents for caseworkers, supervisors, support workers, the Director of Community Operations, as well as the Community Services Department for communication to occur even if a team member is absent from the office. Additionally, foster parents are provided with email addresses for team members to aid in communication. All efforts are made to promptly return phone calls, texts, messages, and emails to address issues and concerns. Kemmerer Village maintains an after-hours crisis number which is provided to all foster parents. Caseworkers are assigned on a rotating on-call schedule. The 24-hour crisis number allows foster parents to always reach a staff member in the event of an emergency, even during evenings, weekends, and holidays.

The clerk is a central point of communication and coordination. This position provides a consistent point of contact when the caseworker, supervisor, and/or support workers are in the field. The clerk is a vital communication resource and reaches out to foster parents to determine their communication preferences, and to ensure the KV team always has the most up-to-date information on hand. Additionally, the Kemmerer Village Foster Care private Facebook group was established to share information, ideas, resources, motivation, opportunities, and more. The team of support workers and the Director of Community Operations oversee the Facebook group to ensure only Kemmerer Village foster parents and agency staff have access to the page.

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Throughout the past several years, effort has been put into improving the availability of and attendance at training and meetings for foster parents. This has been an ongoing area of need and concentration. Kemmerer Village recognized the significance of training as a need and places value in ongoing training, information, and support. To increase foster parent support, Kemmerer Village developed the role of the Foster Parent Support Worker (FPSW) in 2019 and added a second FPSW in 2022. The introduction of this position proved to be invaluable for our foster parents. The structure of this position changed in 2023, expanding to an entire team rather than two individuals. The title of the team was changed to Community Services Support Worker (CSSW) to better reflect and capture the significant impact these workers have on supporting the entire team, which includes foster parents, clients, and caseworkers in the achievement of permanency.

The Community Services Support Workers (CSSW) serve as the primary licensing representatives for the agency and strive to meet with all new foster parents within the first thirty (30) days of placement to provide information about foster care, the Kemmerer Village program, facilitate licensure, and aid with the adaptation to the foster parent role. The support worker supports foster care staff in the orientation of newly placed foster care clients in the Kemmerer Village program. In efforts to assist families entering foster care, they provide a “Welcome Packet” which includes information regarding what kind of children need foster homes, how to become licensed foster parents, required consents, the importance of permanency, and the grievance procedure. Additionally, the CSSWs provide training and host meetings twice monthly to provide support, training, fellowship, and information to foster parents. The meetings are offered both in person and via Zoom, and discussion of Foster Parent Law is included at every meeting. While all foster parents are encouraged to seek licensure, training and support is offered to all foster parents regardless of licensure status.

All Community Services Support Workers have been trained as caseworkers and hold a Child Welfare License, therefore they possess significant knowledge regarding foster care. The value of the support worker has been demonstrated in several ways, including; increased communication of needs, increased requests for assistance and support, increased ability to recognize areas of need and support, increased interest in training, increased input regarding training topics, increased opportunity for trainings and meetings, improved communication and the ability to answer questions with consistency, programmatic ability to refer foster parents for individualized training, and as a support for new staff in need of training. Growth of the team up to six members has resulted in a broader base of knowledge from which to help, train, and support foster parents, improved follow-through, and more expedient action. We believe in this support team and remain excited regarding the level of personalized attention and support this has allowed our program to provide.

The transition specialist works with discharge resources and families to ensure a smooth transition from Foster Care or Residential Treatment to the child’s subsequent placement. The individual in this role has worked in multiple arenas in the child welfare field, including Residential Treatment and Intact Services, and does hold a Child Welfare License.

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Finally, the program has increased community-based contact and has attended events to support further and promote foster care awareness with plans to continue to grow community outreach. Kemmerer Village strives to support all foster parents, and staff remain available to answer questions and provide support as needed. Because the support team is now fully operational, plans are underway to increase community contacts, increase foster parent specific events and opportunities, and to generally improve the foster parent experience in order to nurture a feeling of community and sense of belonging. The Kemmerer Village team recognizes how being a foster parent is so much more than “just” providing a caring home for a child. It is our goal to seek others who want to share this mission with us and fully support them in their journey. In October 2023, Kemmerer Village was proud to offer all foster parents, staff, and teachers from the local school district the opportunity to attend an in-person presentation by Josh Shipp. Mr. Shipp is a former at-risk foster child who is now a successful author, speaker, and youth advocate. Mr. Shipp speaks about his experiences as a youth in care, the impact of bouncing from home to home, and the trials and tests he utilized to test the limitations of the homes in which he lived. His message serves to help adults understand the impact one person can have on a young person’s life and potential success. Kemmerer Village was happy to offer this event to support our team, and it is hoped more events of this caliber will be in our future!

For all meetings, groups, and training opportunities, invitations are extended to agency staff and foster parents by phone, email, mail, in-person, and Facebook. The private Facebook group is accessible via direct invitation by the support team or Director of Community Operations to agency staff and foster parents. No confidential information is shared on the site. Only basic information regarding meetings, child development, training opportunities, ideas, resources, and motivation are shared. All parties can and are encouraged to request training they feel may enhance their ability to care for, help, or understand the children in their care. Foster parents receive credit towards training hours and maintaining their license for attending. DCFS provides online resources via the new Learning and Development Center (LDC). The transition from the Virtual Training Center (VTC) to the new LDC has been a little bumpy, however the support work team works hand in hand with providers to help them gain access. Support workers meet 1:1 with foster parents if needed to help them access and complete online training. While DCFS no longer offers a lending library, Kemmerer Village does continue to maintain a library of books and training materials available to all foster parents. Following use of related books and materials, foster parents can be granted training credit for the content of the material, support workers assist foster parents with this documentation.

In addition to the LDC, the agency addresses specific needs through individual requests. The foster parent can seek referrals through the assigned caseworker or support worker. The support worker will follow up and direct foster parents to specific training based on individual needs. The support workers have also designated a standard monthly schedule for training so foster parents can always plan for training in advance. Based on feedback and expressed requests of the foster parents, the support team will add additional training to address foster parent needs.

Foster parents and staff receive monetary rewards for every five (5) years and recognition for every year of licensed service. Historically, Kemmerer Village hosted a Christmas party for youth and families. While COVID-19 interfered with Christmas festivities for multiple years, the re-introduction of in-person events in 2022 led to even better program involvement. In 2022

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the Kemmerer Village Therapeutic Recreation Department worked collaboratively with the Community Services Department to include foster care involved youth in an Easter Egg hunt. The event was a smashing success. As a result, Kemmerer Village programs have worked collaboratively to host more activities for youth and families. The three largest annual events include: Easter Egg Hunt, a Fall Carnival/Back to School Bash, and the Christmas Extravaganza. These events include fun games, face painting, fun food, meals, the chance to sink the executive director in a dunk tank, prizes, themed characters, a school supply giveaway, and more. It is important to note these events are open to all youth involved in Kemmerer Village programming and to the families with whom they live and any other children who reside in the home. Kemmerer Village has also implemented a monthly birthday party to celebrate the birthdays of youth in care and other youth who reside in the home. Monthly birthday parties include dinner, cake, a gift for all birthday month children. The Kemmerer Village board is supportive of all programs offered, and often KV Board members attend scheduled parties and events.

Kemmerer Village is fortunate to have strong support from the community and generous donors. Christmas gifts are collected each year and distributed to families. Furthermore, the Optimist Club hosts a Christmas event in Taylorville, Illinois. The Optimist Club buys gifts for foster care families identified by the Community Services team. The Optimist Club accepts a limited number of children/families, however this number has grown every year and in 2023 includes the homes of sixty-one children, including not only foster children but also other children in the foster home. The Optimist Club provides a meal, each child is provided a gift, and the foster parents receive a food basket based on household size.

2. The right to be given standardized pre-service training and appropriate on-going training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve the foster parent's skills.

In addition to meeting the other requirements of DCFS policy Rule 402: Licensure for Foster Family Homes, all prospective licensed foster parents for unrelated children must attend and successfully complete the complete Foster/Adopt PRIDE (Parent Resource for Information, Development, and Education) curriculum. All prospective licensed foster parents for related children must attend and successfully complete Sessions One (1) and Two (2) of the PRIDE pre-service program, in compliance with DCFS Rule 402. All prospective unrelated foster parents participate in a more comprehensive training of 25.5 total hours 912 hours pre-service, 13.5 hours PRIDE. Kemmerer Village has developed a team of staff specifically for the support and training of foster parents. The Kemmerer Village Support Workers serve as licensing representatives for the agency, provide individual support to any caregiver who needs it, and offer training at least twice per month on campus. Additionally, the team has developed a regular newsletter to share information and have increased the social media presence for the private Facebook group for Kemmerer Village foster parents.

As part of the Foster/Adopt PRIDE Program, mutual assessment through observation and discussion is based on an understanding of the special needs of children in family foster care or adoption and the special skills families need to parent them. The educational approach of the pre-service and in-service curriculum reinforces a professional tone for the role of foster and/or adoptive parenting.

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All licensed foster parents for unrelated children in programs other than traditional foster care must complete at least sixteen hours of continuing education every four years to maintain their complexity of care payment. This is tracked by the support workers, with additional training and resources offered as often as possible. In 2023, emphasis has been placed on the achievement of four hours of training per year to keep skills, education, and information fresh.

PRIDE in-service training is offered to Kemmerer Village foster parents in nearby locations, as well as online. Annual calendars are developed and disseminated by DCFS to assist foster parents on locating available modules. Flyers are also sent to foster parents directly by DCFS announcing training opportunities. Any training information Kemmerer Village receives is automatically forwarded to foster parents and posted on the Facebook page, so they have the opportunity to attend any training offered.

All foster parents are encouraged to request training they feel may enhance their ability to care for and/or to help understand the children in their care. The foster parent can seek referrals through the assigned caseworker or support worker. The CSSW will follow up and direct foster parents to specific training based on individual needs. Foster parents receive credit towards training hours and maintaining their license for attending. DCFS provides online training through the Learning and Development Center (LDC), previously the Virtual Training Center. The LDC can be located at <https://learning.dcf.illinois.gov/en/> and it is important to note that every foster parent must have their own account with their own email – foster parents may no longer share an email or training account for LDC purposes. Kemmerer Village Support Workers have spent considerable time sharing LDC information, including the registration process, with foster parents. Information has been presented in person, by mail, and on Facebook. Additionally, support workers will meet with foster parents individually to help facilitate registration and/or the completion of training as needed. Kemmerer Village maintains a library of books and training materials which are available to all foster parents..

Kemmerer Village has an available training room with internet access for foster parents to use in the event they need to complete training online and do not have the resources necessary to do so. Reserving this room is necessary to ensure availability. Foster parents may reserve this room by contacting the Kemmerer Village Community Services Department (217-226-2128).

Ongoing training of both staff and foster parents is made available, utilizing co-training to build the teamwork concept. When needed, Kemmerer Village will pair foster parents with each other and encourage them to share ideas on effectively raising children in care. This training method can be used by pairing experienced foster parents with inexperienced foster parents, relative foster parents, or traditional foster parents. During all training sessions, foster parents are verbally encouraged to share their experiences (in relation to the training) with all participants. This discussion time is an opportunity to share experiences and expertise with the group. Kemmerer Village prides itself on the longevity of many foster parents within the program. The range of service length for licensure of current KV foster homes is from new to forty-two years. Additionally, Kemmerer Village employs five staff members who have been foster parents, three of whom have completed adoption and/or guardianship, and Kemmerer Village staff combine for

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over 100 years of experience. This experience and longevity have proven to be helpful when providing a co-training method to assist foster parents.

Kemmerer Village maintains a training log, which tracks the various training sessions attended by each foster parent. Kemmerer Village keeps foster parents informed via training fliers regarding all-available training opportunities and encourages their attendance. When training dates become available, letters are mailed to every foster parent providing them with the team meeting's date, time, and location. Reminder messages, Facebook posts, and/or phone calls are made a few days prior to each meeting. Kemmerer Village will provide a meal to every participant, when the training event is on the Kemmerer Village campus around mealtime. Additionally, Kemmerer Village developed a team dedicated to the recruitment, training, licensure, and support of foster parents, as well as the addition of a clerk position to coordinate communication, and a Facebook group to help disseminate information.

3. The right to be informed as to how to contact the appropriate child placement agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for children in the foster parent's care.

Every foster home receives contact information, including the direct office line for caseworkers, supervisors, support workers, and the Community Services Department, as well as the after-hours phone number for a contact in case of an emergency or crisis. For additional assistance, Kemmerer Village has access to SASS (Screening Assessment and Supportive Services) providers for the counties in which Kemmerer Village foster parents reside. Foster care staff can refer foster parents to SASS providers. Kemmerer Village also maintains a full-time therapist on staff, who is available to assist with any after-hours crisis. The therapist can be contacted during a crisis to provide further supportive services and to help determine the need for a child to undergo the screening process. In the event of an acute emergency, foster care providers are prompted to call 911 for immediate assistance, and the caseworker, or on-call worker if applicable, will maintain contact for follow-up, which may include phone or in-person contact. A determination regarding which type of follow-up is needed is made based on the circumstances at hand.

Caseworkers may refer clients for Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) services based on the needs of the case. IPS services vary by county; however, they include such services as individual counseling, foster parent education and support services, and in-home care. While not an option for an acute emergency, IPS services are designed as supportive services necessary to maintain the placement. Caseworkers and foster parents will discuss IPS as an option, and if all parties agree, caseworkers will initiate the referral for IPS services. External agencies are contracted by DCFS for the provision of IPS services in designated areas.

All foster parents are provided information about online access to the Foster Family Handbook. A paper copy of the Foster Family Handbook can be provided if they are unable to access the material online. The handbook is updated periodically to ensure that the information is current and correct. This handbook explains various topics such as the juvenile court system, health services available, and educational information as a form of support.

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In addition to supportive services for foster children, as of September 2021, Kemmerer Village extends access to Care Now by LifeWorks to licensed foster parents. Care Now is a counseling and referral service designed to help foster parents with a wide range of personal concerns. Care Now gives foster parents access to a range of programs designed to help with topics and issues such as anxiety, depression, stress management, financial tips, and more. Care Now provides a multitude of program options so users can pick the content they feel would benefit them the most. Foster parents can participate in individual counseling, interactive content, exercises, meditation, online assessments, podcasts, videos, and more. Care Now is accessible through LifeWorks on the web platform (login.lifeworks.com), telephone (1-800-433-7916), or smartphone app. An individual user ID is required. Foster parents can request this information from any member of the Kemmerer Village team. Information regarding the availability of this program is shared in the Kemmerer Village Foster Care Facebook group periodically as a reminder.

4. The right to receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with the care needs of the child as specified in the service plan.

Financial reimbursement for room and board is determined at the time of placement, based on three primary factors: the licensure status of the home in which the child is placed, the age of the child, and the child's level of care. DCFS determines the rate of payment for each type of home and for each level of care, which is outlined in DCFS Procedure 359. It is important to note that payment to foster parents is not considered income. While referred to as payment, funds are actually reimbursement for the cost associated with the care of the child in their home, including room and board, food, clothing, allowance, and as of October 1, 2023, transportation. Foster parents are vital members of the Child and Family Team but are not paid employees. Realistically, the reimbursement received for the care of a child is likely less than the actual costs associated with the care of the child. More information regarding additional financial assistance provided is outlined below.

Tracking and issuance of foster parent reimbursement is a multi-faceted process. When a child is placed in a foster home, documentation (form CFS-906) is submitted to DCFS to authorize the placement and payment. The initial 906 is completed and submitted by DCFS prior to the case being assigned to Kemmerer Village, but a copy is provided to KV upon case assignment. While a child is in the care of Kemmerer Village, the caseworker is responsible for completion of any new CFS-906 if a placement change or change in level of care occurs. The documentation is submitted to the Director of Community Operations and the Community Services Clerk for review. When complete and correct, the Community Services Clerk submits the CFS-906 to DCFS Case Assignment and Payment Unit for data entry.

The Director of Community Operations maintains an ongoing list of all youth in care whose cases are assigned to Kemmerer Village. The list includes youth name, date of birth, age, assigned caseworker, date of case assignment to KV, name of the foster parent, date of placement in the home, and type of home (relative, licensed or unlicensed, traditional, specialized, etc.). The list notes any significant changes, moves, reunification, or any other information that might impact payment. The list remains updated as placement documentation is received and is sent to the Kemmerer Village Financial Department the last week of every month for processing. From this list, the financial department verifies the youth and placement status,

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and generates payment to foster parents for reimbursement of cost associate with the care of the youth. After reimbursement information and amounts are generated, individual statements are sent to the Director of Community Operations for final review and approval. Upon approval, checks are generated for distribution on the 1st of the month. At present, all foster parents are paid via check, however Kemmerer Village has undertaken a project to work toward implementation of direct deposit as has been requested by many caregivers.

All unlicensed relative foster parents are paid a standard of need rate for the children in their care. This standard of need rate is a flat rate per child, determined by the state (previously, rates varied by county and by the number of children in the home). As of July 1, 2020, payment for every child in the care of Kemmerer Village is mailed directly to the foster parent by Kemmerer Village on the first of every month. This change is significant and beneficial change for unlicensed foster parents as the time between placement and initial payment is significantly reduced. Additionally, questions regarding payment can be fielded and answered or resolved quickly by KV staff. For a new case, payment for the dates a child is in placement before the case is assigned to Kemmerer Village is paid by DCFS. During the initial months of placement, Kemmerer Village will help foster parents obtain necessary clothing, diapers, formula, beds (if unlicensed), hygiene supplies, and infant equipment. Kemmerer Village also maintains a donation room which contains donated clothing, sometimes furniture, and is available to all foster parents. Requests to access the donation room are managed by caseworkers and support workers.

Kemmerer Village remains responsible for payment to all licensed foster parents. The Kemmerer Village Board of Directors has established a fee policy for payment of licensed foster parents. In short, Kemmerer Village compensates foster parents 100% of the room and board rate provided to the agency by DCFS. The rate is determined by the age of the child that is placed in the home and includes expenditures for room and food costs, a monthly personal allowance paid to the foster parents for the children, a monthly clothing allowance, and as of October 1, 2023, a monthly stipend for transportation costs. The child is not expected to spend their allowance for things covered by the board payment (utilities, food, etc.). Allowance can be used to cover such expenses as recreation, personal grooming, and toys. Disbursement of the clothing allowance is the foster parent's responsibility and should be used for clothing, uniforms, coats, shoes, among other basic need items. Foster parents are encouraged by the agency to track and maintain records of receipts and expenditures.

Upon placement in foster care, every child is assigned a level of care based on their individual needs. If a child requires intensive or specialized services to address ongoing medical, behavioral, or emotional needs, they may qualify for "Specialized Foster Care" to meet those needs. Along with additional services and case management support, children at this level of care qualify for a significantly higher level of payment. Only licensed foster parents may receive the specialized rate of pay – payment for children in unlicensed homes remains at the standard of need level regardless of the level of care. If a home has begun the licensure process and maintains care of a child at the specialized level of care, they can be approved to receive a higher rate of pay referred to as the Difficulty of Care payment. Determination regarding approval for the DOC payment is made by the DCFS clinical team upon request by the Director of Community Operations. Additionally, if a child has been determined to have a special need for

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which they are qualified for Social Security benefits, DCFS will provide an additional Special Need Stipend if the home is an unlicensed relative, to help offset the higher cost associated with that child's need. This special need stipend is not granted to licensed homes, as they already receive an increased rate for the care of that child.

Kemmerer Village pays all foster parents monthly. Checks are available on the first day of each month. Direct deposit is currently not available to foster parents; however, this has been a long-standing goal and the process of establishing direct deposit has been started. Payment to the foster parents covers expenses for the preceding calendar month. If the first falls on a holiday or a weekend, the checks are available on the last day of the previous month. If a home was unlicensed but then achieves licensure, the rate of pay is increased to the licensed/specialized rate once the license is approved by DCFS. Increase in pay becomes effective upon receipt of written notification of such to Kemmerer Village by DCFS. It is not uncommon for verification to take a few (1-3) months to receive, however payment adjustment will be made retroactive to the approval date.

Non-recurring expenses related to the care and treatment of the children (camp fees, graduation expenses, music/dance lessons, athletic fees, extraordinary mileage, etc.) are reimbursed or paid directly by Kemmerer Village according to DCFS Rule 359.7. Requests for non-recurring expenses are made through each child's caseworker, approved by their supervisor, and submitted to the Director of Community Operations with receipts for approval on an "as needed" basis. Upon approval such requests are slated for payment within a maximum of ten business days.

Foster parents caring for children requiring a specialized level of care are allotted two calendar days per month of respite care paid for by the agency. Respite foster care is temporary (not to exceed thirty days), full-time care in a licensed foster family home, group home, day care institution, or in a license exempt relative home during which temporary, full-time care is provided to foster children. Respite foster care is provided to specialized foster children to give the full-time foster parents a rest from caregiving responsibilities and to prevent placement disruption. Payment that is covered by the agency will be disbursed to the respite provider concurrent with monthly foster parent payment. If additional days throughout the month are needed for respite care, the foster parent will be responsible for payment. Foster parents who have children who are not specialized do not receive respite care paid for by the agency, however Kemmerer Village will help facilitate respite care as needed.

If the foster parent is experiencing problems or concerns with their payment, the Kemmerer Village staff work with the foster parent to resolve the issues or concern to the best of their ability. If Kemmerer Village performs a clerical payment error, the foster parent can notify the caseworker or the caseworker's supervisor, who will then inform the Director of Community Operations, or they may contact the Director of Community Operations directly. The Director of Community Operations will communicate with the Kemmerer Village Financial Department and resolve the issue immediately upon notice. If questions or concerns arise regarding payment for which DCFS is responsible, Kemmerer Village staff will facilitate contact with the DCFS Central Payment Unit for resolution.

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- 5. The right to be provided a clear, written understanding of a placement agency's plan concerning the placement of a child in the foster parent's home. Inherent in this right is the foster parent's responsibility to support activities that will promote the child's right to relationships with his or her own family and cultural heritage.**

Kemmerer Village foster parents participate in assessment of the child's needs, development of a case plan or service plan for the child-in care, assisting in the implementation of this plan within the designated period, and evaluating progress toward the goals of the plan.

Kemmerer Village foster parents are involved in the screening process of potential clients prior to placement. Every attempt is made to match the client, the permanency plan, and the need for intervention to the most appropriate home closest to the biological family. Kemmerer Village encourages the foster parent to have pre-placement visits with the child to enable the foster parent and the child to evaluate the possible placement. DCFS utilizes the Integrated Assessment (IA) process, which helps determine the appropriate placement and services for each individual child. The foster parents are essential in the IA process, including participation in an interview concerning the child in their care. The IA interview is conducted by the clinical screener contracted by DCFS. As a result of the IA, recommendations may be made regarding goals, assistance, or interventions based on any assessed needs.

The Client Service Plan and Administrative Case Review (ACR) is the method for setting and reviewing goals for families served by Kemmerer Village. Foster parent input and attendance are vital to the ACR process. Training about the ACR process is covered in the PRIDE pre-service and in-service training for foster parents. Foster parent input into the visitation and communication plan for their foster children with the children's birth family is sought and considered during the development of such plans, and attempts are made to coordinate visits around the needs of the home schedule (home activities, school, appointments, etc.) as it is possible to do so. Kemmerer Village encourages the foster parent to communicate with the birth parents when the child's goal is to return home, particularly as reunification appears to be nearing. Parents are encouraged to attend medical appointments, school appointments, and other special events as they are able, and it is appropriate to do so. Therefore, sustaining a good working relationship between the parents and all other child welfare team members, including foster parents, is significant.

Notice of the ACR is sent directly from the Administrative Case Review office to the foster parent and the youth in care at least one week in advance. If the foster parent or child recently moved, it is the responsibility of the caseworker to check with the foster parents to make sure they are notified and to gather input before the review. Additionally, caseworkers will remind foster parents and families of the ACR date as it approaches. ACR dates are scheduled once every six months throughout the life of the case and dates are predetermined on a review cycle.

Anytime a child's plan is changed, including moving the child from a foster home, the change is first discussed with the foster parent verbally, then followed up with a letter explaining the reason and time frames necessary to achieve this change. If the child is not at imminent risk of harm or court-ordered to move, the written decision regarding placement change will give a fourteen-day notice for movement. The foster parents are informed of their rights to appeal the

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changed service plan or movement by being given a copy of the appeal procedures. These appeal rights are covered in the Foster Parent Manual, which is sent to all licensed foster parents and is distributed to all pre-service foster parents as part of the Foster/Adopt PRIDE training course. Caseworkers can provide foster parents information regarding the appeal process, including contact information for the advocacy hotline, both verbally and in writing. The appeal process is as follows:

Once the foster parent is given notice of a child being removed from their home, the foster parent may call 1-866-225-1431 to request a Clinical Placement Review. The foster parent also has the option to fax their request for a Clinical Placement Review to 1-800-733-3308. Foster parents have 3 days from the point of notification to request Placement Review. Once the request has been accepted by the Clinical Review Team, a Clinical Services Coordinator assesses the case by listening to the foster parent and the agency during a group setting to consider the best interest of the children. The agency must abide by the decision of the coordinator; however, the foster parent may appeal the decision to the Administrative Hearings Unit. If the decision was appealed and sent to the Administrative Hearings Unit the matter is heard by an Administrative Law Judge who considers not only what the coordinator's decision was but also if everything was done in accordance with policy and foster parents rights.

Foster parents are encouraged by Kemmerer Village to attend ACRs. Since 2020, the ACR process has been held via Webex or phone conference rather than via in-person meeting. This presents fewer barriers for participation in general, however foster parents are provided support to aid them in participating in the ACR process if a barrier is present. This assistance includes provision of transportation if needed, adjusting the length of time required for a review, or establishing a conference call if parents are incarcerated or in a rehabilitation center, or providing a phone or location for participation in the conference call. Kemmerer Village assistance is extended to foster parents in an effort to assist the foster parents during or after the movement of a foster child as well as throughout changes in the treatment plan of the child. This includes attempting to maintain open communication about the well-being of a child after the move.

- 6. The right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of complaints concerning the foster parent's licensure, to be provided the opportunity to have a person of the foster parent's choosing present during the investigation, and to be provided due process during the investigation; the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation or an administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters, or both mediation and an administrative review; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.**

Each Kemmerer Village foster home is provided information about online access to the Foster Family Handbook. If the home is unable to access the material online a paper copy will be distributed. The handbook details licensing complaint investigations, licensing procedures and enforcement, provider rights in enforcement, a copy of Rule 337-the Service Appeal Process, child abuse and neglect investigations, and the appeal process of child abuse and neglect findings. Foster parents receive training regarding investigations via PRIDE pre-service training

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and in-service modules. Any changes or additions to the 402 Licensing Standards are given to the foster parents via USPS mail, included in monthly foster parent support groups, and by posting on the Kemmerer Village Foster Care Facebook page. Explanations are given to avoid any complaints stemming from the lack of knowledge. Additionally, KV staff are happy to answer any questions if additional information is needed.

All licensing staff receive training regarding investigations of foster family homes and the foster family's rights, including the right to appeal final investigation decisions. Licensing staff are aware of the foster parent's right to have an advocate of their choosing present during any investigation, and the licensing staff worker present will remind the foster parent of this right upon notification of an investigation.

Foster parents are aware that open communication with the assigned workers and accurate documentation are essential in protecting themselves from or during an investigation. When reports are made regarding allegations of abuse and neglect, concurrent investigations are conducted by both the Division of Child Protection (DCP) and agency licensing staff. The agency's licensing staff investigates any licensing violations related to such allegations, while DCP will investigate alleged abuse or neglect accusations. Agency licensing staff will follow up on all investigations as necessary within the parameters of Rule 402. The procedure to follow up a licensing investigation is as follows:

A Kemmerer Village licensing staff will make an in-person visit to the home where the alleged licensing violation occurred within forty-eight (48) hours of being notified of the allegation. At this initial contact, Kemmerer Village staff will: inform the foster parent of the allegation, discuss potential licensing violations being investigated, will share information regarding what to expect as the investigation proceeds, provide a copy of the Licensing Investigation Brochure and Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities, Notify the foster parent of their right to have an advocate present, and answer questions regarding their rights and responsibilities. Kemmerer Village staff will conduct interviews with the involved parties, in order to make a final determination regarding the presence of a licensing violation within thirty (30) days (or within 30 days of the closure of the child abuse/neglect investigation). If a licensing violation has occurred, Kemmerer Village will work with the foster parents to develop a corrective or protective plan if necessary. Kemmerer Village will notify the foster parent, GAL, A&I Licensing Representative, and the reporter (if known), regarding the results of the licensing violation upon completion of the investigation. In the event the possible licensing violation is also a child abuse and/or neglect investigation, the Kemmerer Village licensing worker will work concurrently with the DCFS investigation.

Foster parents have the right for the decision and outcome of the investigation to be reviewed. Foster parents are provided this information both verbally and in writing at the conclusion of the investigation. Foster parents may submit a written request for a supervisory review of the agency decision. This request must be faxed or postmarked within ten (10) days of written notification of the decision. Within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of the request, the Director of Community Operations will contact the foster parent to schedule a meeting with the foster parent. The foster parent will be offered the opportunity to meet with the agency licensing representative, the

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Director of Community Operations, and the Executive Director to provide information about the complaint. Information discussed during this meeting will be subsequently reviewed by the above parties, and written confirmation of the outcome will be provided to the foster parent within seventy-two (72) hours.

7. The right, at any time during which a child is placed with the foster parent, to receive additional or necessary information that is relevant to the care of the child.

The CFS 600-4 “SHARING INFORMATION WITH THE PARENT” is used by caseworkers as a tool for gathering pertinent information on children in unrelated placements. Foster parents shall sign off on this form to acknowledge they received this information. Foster parents also receive additional or necessary information relevant to the care of the child at any point during placement, as the information is received by the agency. Such information is exchanged in the most appropriate and timely manner possible via telephone, in person, ACRs, court hearings, or child and family team meetings. Open communication with foster parents, caseworkers, support workers, and the Director of Community Operations is maintained to ensure foster parents have all the information necessary to successfully maintain the child.

All Kemmerer Village staff (caseworkers, case aides, support workers, supervisors, clerks) receive in-service training on information which can be disclosed to providers, including HIPAA laws and regulations. Caseworkers are held accountable for sharing such information through close supervision with their supervisor, with oversight by the Director of Community Operations, as well as careful on-going monitoring of the case record documentation. It is important to note that Kemmerer Village maintains a standard procedure to restrict access to case files if a staff member has a known familial or close relationship to any client. Under such circumstances, case files are maintained in a separate, secure location to limit physical access to records. Applicable supervisors are made aware of the relationship in order to ensure no related work assignment is made to the staff member in question.

Caseworker accountability is documented in child and family team meetings, caseworker/supervisor supervisory meetings and annual evaluations. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in any assessment that is recommended during the child’s placement. Foster parents can always contact the assigned supervisor directly if they feel their caseworker is not being held accountable for their actions, or foster parents may utilize the grievance procedure. The Director of Community Operations may also be contacted if a resolution is not first achieved with the supervisor.

Kemmerer Village submits an evaluation of services to all foster parents to assess their satisfaction annually. The delivery of this survey has changed over time, following multiple years of poor or no response. Kemmerer Village began the development of an electronic (online) survey last year. The new survey has not yet been activated, however it is anticipated this survey will be live prior to the end of 2023.

Included in the survey is a question regarding the satisfaction of foster parents regarding the information they receive about the children in their care. Average ratings from foster parents, of

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the information they receive about children in their care for the past years is as follows (where rating of 5.0 indicates “Completely Satisfied”):

2012 average rating 4.7 out of 5.0

2013 average rating 5.0 out of 5.0

2014 average rating 4.3 out of 5.0

2015 average rating 5.0 out of 5.0

2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 – No foster parents returned the survey

2021, 2022 – No survey was distributed

2023 – new online survey to be activated by year’s end

Kemmerer Village participated in COA review in 2020. Multiple foster parents participated in the review and survey process, all of whom provided positive feedback regarding their experiences with the agency. Kemmerer Village will be participating in COA review in 2024, and foster parents will be actively encouraged to participate again.

8. The right to be given information concerning a child from the Department as required under Section 5 (u) of the Children and Family Services Act and from a child welfare agency as required under Section 7.4 (c-5) of the Child Care Act of 1969. [20 ILCS 520/1-15]

At the time the caseworker places a child with a foster parent or prospective adoptive parent, or prior to placement of the child (whenever possible), the worker shall provide pertinent information in writing about the child, necessary for the proper care of the child by the foster parent or prospective adoptive parent. The information to be provided to the foster parent shall include:

- The medical history of the child, including known medical problems or communicable diseases, information concerning the immunization status of the child, and insurance and medical card information.
- The educational history of the child, including any special educational needs and details of the child’s Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) when the child is receiving special education services or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan, if applicable.
- A copy of the child’s portion of the client service plan including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions; case history of the child, including how the child came into care; the child’s legal status; the permanency goal for the child; a history of the child’s previous placements; and reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home foster parent.
- Other relevant background information for the child, including; exposure to trauma or traumatic experiences, adjustment to trauma, adjustment to previous placement(s), any prior criminal history, information relating to behavior problems such

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as fire setting or running away, perpetration or victim of sexual abuse, destructive behavior, substance abuse habits, and likes and dislikes.

In order to facilitate placement of a child in a prospective foster home, the agency makes every attempt to provide information to the prospective foster parent in a transparent manner in order to support a fully informed decision regarding placement. In instances that an emergency placement is needed, the worker shall provide known information verbally as it becomes available and subsequently provide this information in writing to the approved foster parent. If the referral for placement is received from DCFS or another agency, the worker shall provide known information when seeking a prospective placement. If the referral for placement is a current Kemmerer Village client, information is more readily available and will be shared by the agency upfront for consideration. Information which is known by the agency may include, but is not limited to: age, gender or gender identity, strengths, interests, school/grade/educational needs, history of trauma and trauma response, religious preference if indicated, mental health history, substance use history, behavioral presentation, involvement in services (mental health, counseling, medication, substance abuse treatment, etc.), the extent of family involvement, contact/geographic information about siblings if not placed together, permanency plan, supervision plan if applicable, medical history, legal status or involvement with the criminal system, etc.

Kemmerer Village Transition Specialist (intake worker) will request honest and open disclosure for all referrals to ensure an appropriate placement is made. A pre-placement in-person screening occurs on every child placed in a Kemmerer Village foster home whenever possible. A pre-placement visit is also arranged when time allows. The screening consists of meeting the foster parent(s), an overview of the program, and the exchange of information.

Kemmerer Village caseworkers, supervisors, and support workers receive in-service training regarding trauma, the impact of trauma on the population served, and methods of recognizing and coping with trauma. Caseworkers, supervisors, and support workers also receive training on information that the agency can disclose. Caseworkers are held accountable for sharing such information through close supervision with their supervisor, general oversight by the Director of Community Operations, and careful ongoing monitoring of the case record documentation. Foster parents may contact the Director of Community Operations directly if they feel their caseworker is not accountable for their actions, or they may utilize the grievance policy if further action is necessary.

- 9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians, and teachers.**

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Kemmerer Village foster parents shall be notified by their caseworker of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the youth in their care. This information is relayed to encourage active participation in the case planning and the decision-making process. These notifications are either verbal, in writing, or both. The foster parent's input is given full consideration. Foster parents are invited to family meetings with the child's biological family when applicable, and per the preference of the foster parent, to discuss progress and time frames relative to the case. Kemmerer Village caseworkers are accountable for promptly informing the foster parents regarding scheduled meetings and staffings concerning youth in the foster parents' care. Foster parents are verbally reminded of their right to participate and encouraged to attend such meetings of which they are notified to ensure that they receive all pertinent information regarding the needs of the child within the planning context of the child welfare team.

Kemmerer Village ensures the foster parents remain updated about the decisions made in the event the foster parents are unable to attend by verbally informing them of all decisions affecting the children in their care. If any follow-up is needed, the foster parent can address their concerns with the assigned caseworker's supervisor. It is recognized that the foster care system can be overwhelming, particularly to new foster parents not as familiar with the system. For this reason, the support team works to provide support and education to foster parents about the foster care system, including the court process, service planning, visit planning, clinical staffing, legal screening process, realistic timeframes for case benchmark achievements, etc. This education is part of the bimonthly support groups but can also occur individually as needed. When possible, more seasoned caregivers are paired with newer caregivers to help answer their questions and to share their experiences to help best prepare them everything involved in a child's case.

Foster parents receive notification of all court hearings by the Kemmerer Village caseworkers. Caseworkers are also responsible for disseminating any pertinent information to the court if foster parents are unable to attend. Foster parents are informed by the caseworker of decisions made by the courts, changes or conditions of probation, community service issues, and any decisions made by DCFS or Kemmerer Village concerning the child. Foster parents are encouraged to communicate with all the members of the child's team.

Administrative Case Review notifications are sent from the review office directly to foster parents with backup notice made by caseworkers. The foster parents are made aware of the dates and times of visits between the child and the biological family. Notifications can be done verbally and are documented in the client's visitation plan. As these meetings are scheduled in advance, foster parents are encouraged to alert their caseworker if the pre-scheduled time does not work in their schedule, so an alternate time may be arranged.

Foster parents communicate with their caseworker or the Kemmerer Village therapist regarding the need for psychiatric evaluation for children in their care. Dr. David Decker, Kemmerer Village consulting child & adolescent psychiatrist, is on grounds at Kemmerer Village one full day per month solely for children in foster care. Dr. Decker is also available to the clinical team for additional or emergency consultation if necessary. The therapist and campus RN coordinate appointments with and for Dr. Decker and obtain information from teachers and schools. Foster parents are vital to the assessment and monitoring process. Foster parents are always invited to

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be a part of the consultation by the caseworker to provide additional information and input to the therapist and RN. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to be present during the consultation to provide pertinent information and report observations. Direct education regarding medication decisions, potential side effects, treatment plan, and objectives, is provided during psychiatric consultation. The Kemmerer Village Therapist and RN are also available to help with additional information if needed.

- 10. The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

Kemmerer Village staff will share information with the foster parents, as foster parents are members of the professional child welfare team. Information will be disclosed by Kemmerer Village staff during weekly, bi-monthly or monthly in-home meetings. Kemmerer Village staff will disclose information to the foster parents regarding sensitive, personal information which is pertinent to the needs and care of the child about the child, the child's exposure to trauma, indicators or symptoms of traumatic response displayed by the child, his or her legal history (including legal charges, probation issues, upcoming hearings and all court dates), health history, the reason the child came into care and information surrounding the family's situation along with the case's satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. Kemmerer Village has adopted and will continue using the DCFS form CFS600-4, "Sharing Information with the Foster parent." During all exchanges of information with the foster parent, the requirements regarding client confidentiality are maintained. Input from the foster parent about how the child is doing in the foster home is also vital to maintain the child's placement in the foster parent's home. Open communication between the caseworker, therapist, and the foster parent is essential in achieving a mutual goal for the children being served.

Along with this information comes a large responsibility on the foster parent to keep such information confidential. Training for foster parents on this topic is covered in pre-service and in-service PRIDE training. How to keep information and records confidential is covered in the Foster Family Handbook, which all Kemmerer Village foster homes can access. Foster parents are reminded of confidentiality guidelines by casework staff and as part of ongoing training conducted by the support team.

Foster parents are to be informed of the permanency goal for each child. Kemmerer Village staff cannot disclose specific information regarding a biological parent's progress in their service plan without specific consent to do so. However, each foster family shall be asked for input regarding their role or willingness to provide permanency for the children in their care if parents are unable to achieve reunification. Foster parents are also encouraged to participate in permanency planning when reunification is imminent. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in child and family team meetings as part of the transition planning process, to help support the child

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with the transition back into the home, and to express their concerns or the needs of the child to the parents. Ideally, foster parents and parents will agree to work together for a cohesive and supported transition process, allowing the child, the parents, and the foster family to feel ready and prepared. Foster parents are advised that it is acceptable and encouraged to remain involved in the life of the child provided the parents allow such contact. Kemmerer Village has numerous foster parents who have maintained lasting connection with the youth who lived in their home only for a season but became a valued part of their family.

The assigned Kemmerer Village caseworker is accountable for sharing appropriate information with the foster parent in a timely manner in writing, by telephone conference, or via in-person contact. All community service staff have been given information, training, and signed acknowledgement statements regarding the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

11. The right to be given reasonable written notice of any change in a child's case plan, plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster parent, and the reason for the change or termination in placement. The notice shall be waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

Kemmerer Village caseworkers will notify the foster parent of time, place, and details of all court orders regarding any change pertinent to the placement. Foster parents are encouraged to attend these court hearings to stay informed of all court recommendations and are verbally encouraged to participate in family meetings.

Foster parents have access to the child's caseworker, supervisor, the support team, and the Director of Community Operations, during normal business hours. Foster parents can access agency staff after business hours (including weekends and holidays) via the on-call phone number for emergencies. Foster parents receive copies of changes in a child's service plan, and when applicable, they also receive a written fourteen-day Notice of Decision (CFS 151) of Kemmerer Village's intent to terminate the placement of a child. The agency will make an exception to remove a child from a foster parent's home based on the imminent risk of harm to the child. The written notice includes the reason for the change or termination of the child's placement and a statement of the foster parent's rights to appeal the decision with instructions on how to complete the process. In the event the foster parent wishes to appeal or have an emergency review process conducted regarding the change in the case plan or termination of placement of the child, the assigned caseworker is tasked with assisting the foster parent with any part of the process. This process is also identified on pages 11-12 of the 2023 Foster parent Law Implementation Plan.

If at any time Kemmerer Village determines that the foster child is at imminent risk of harm, the fourteen-day notice will be waived. In a case in which the foster child is judged to be at imminent risk of harm in the current placement, the agency will immediately remove the child from the foster home, and the foster parents will subsequently be given verbal and written notice of the full reasons(s) for the termination of the placement. Verbal notice will be given prior to, if determined safe to do so, or during the time of the removal of the child. If given verbal notice

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of removal, the caseworker is responsible for providing written notice by USPS certified mail within three 3 days of the termination of placement.

Appeal rights, including the emergency review process, are contained in the Notice of Decision and in the Foster Family Handbook, which all foster parents have access to online, and which is given to all foster parents upon licensure, as well as pages 11-12 of the 2023 Foster parent Law Implementation Plan.

12. The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearing, and the court docket number of the case; and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.

It is recognized that the primary responsibility is with the assigned caseworker to not only notify the foster parent of upcoming court hearings but to also discuss, in advance, the pending recommendations and plans or reports being given to the court. DCFS and Kemmerer Village monitors accountability of notification by the caseworker through case note documentation and weekly staff meetings.

The caseworkers' responsibility includes informing the foster parent of the dates, their right to be heard in court, and their right to file a Writ of Mandamus. A Writ of Mandamus is an order from a court to command officials to properly fulfill their duties or correct an abuse of discretion. All foster parents are informed of their right to intervene in court proceedings or seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 as a part of their pre-service training and their continuing in-service training. Kemmerer Village encourages and supports foster parents and will provide resources in their pursuit of additional training regarding court procedures.

13. The right to be considered as a placement option, when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parent is to be reentered into foster care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the foster parent's home.

To minimize stress and trauma to the child, and to ensure as much continuity in the child's life as possible, if a new placement occurs it is expected that the intake worker will first explore the child's case file to identify any previous placements that may serve the child's best interest. Kemmerer Village maintains an on-going placement history file to ensure that the former foster parent is always considered before other foster parents for children reentering the care of Kemmerer Village. If the child is old enough to be verbal, the intake worker is expected to verbally assess the child's attachment or feeling about the prior placements.

Foster parents are encouraged to understand that the best interest of the child is always the prevailing consideration. If other siblings were also in placement, then placement with siblings is a primary consideration. Placement with kin might also be considered if kin were the best plan for the child. The Kemmerer Village intake worker assesses the risks of placement in a previous foster home for the child facing reentry and for other children residing in that foster home.

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Through a comprehensive study of the past placement and the current status of the foster child, other children in the home and other circumstances of the home, a collaborative decision is made regarding the best interest of the child (or children) and family.

14. The right to have timely access to the child placement agency's existing appeals process and the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to appeal.

Kemmerer Village has a foster parent grievance procedure. A copy of the grievance procedure is distributed to every foster home as an attachment to the Kemmerer Village Foster parent Law Plan. As of September 2021, the grievance procedure is included in the Welcome Packet that is distributed by the support team. The Kemmerer Village Foster Parent Grievance Procedure predates the Illinois Foster parent Law. The current grievance policy was written, with the input of administrators, staff, and foster parents, as evidence of compliance with COA standards in 1992. Pursuant to encouragement from DCFS, the Kemmerer Village grievance procedure was amended to read, "This grievance process is to be used by foster parents only for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. E.g., it cannot be used to address issues that are covered by service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing, investigation findings or license revocations, etc."

Kemmerer Village foster parents are free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the grievance procedure. Unless directly applicable, the identity of the grievant is to remain confidential. All Kemmerer Village staff are aware of and agree, in writing, to maintain the integrity of confidentiality standards. Additionally, all staff are always expected to conduct themselves professionally through regular supervisory contact and performance standards. Any act of retaliation is considered a violation of performance standards and will be addressed as such. Written documentation of supervisory follow-up and/or disciplinary action up to and potentially including termination of employment will be implemented. Kemmerer Village strives to maintain a standard of excellence, which is demonstrated through the work performance of all staff and the longevity of staff who choose to remain a valued part of the Kemmerer Village team.

The DCFS service appeal process is delineated in the Foster Family Handbook, which is available online for each Kemmerer Village foster home. A copy of the Foster Family Handbook may be provided if the home is unable to access the material online. The assigned Kemmerer Village caseworker or support worker is responsible for assisting foster parents in accessing the external DCFS appeals system when such might be needed or advisable. Training regarding the DCFS appeals system is available through both the PRIDE pre-service and in-service training. A foster parent may request a copy of the DCFS service appeal pamphlet CFS 1050-32 from the Kemmerer Village foster care office, caseworker, or support worker at any time.

15. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under section 35.6 of the children and family services act and all of the rights according to foster parent's concerning reports of misconduct by department employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation

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by the Inspector General appointed under section 35.5 of the children and family services act.

The Foster Family Handbook includes details including the phone number to report misconduct to the Inspector General's Office (OIG). The OIG Office investigates misconduct by the agency and department employees. Information regarding which types of conduct violations can be reported are provided at the onset of the case in either paper or online format via the Foster Family Handbook or can be accessed online. The OIG Foster Parent Hotline is accessible via telephone and TTY. Foster parents are encouraged to report misconduct by department employees, service providers and contractors, and recognize the office will handle all reports in a confidential manner.

Information regarding OIC and the Foster Parent Hotline is part of PRIDE training, and is also disseminated via ongoing trainings, foster parent newsletters, and support groups. Foster parents are also verbally reminded of the hotline by caseworkers. Foster parents are also provided information regarding the Advocacy Office, which will field calls regarding case related decisions, suspected performance issues of caseworkers such as lack of action, potential misunderstandings unable to be resolved with the supervisor, misinformation or not being informed, etc.

The Advocacy Office number is 800-232-3798 or 217-524-2029
The OIG Foster parent Hotline is 800-722-9124

Part III. Narrative of Foster parent Responsibilities [20 ILCS 520/1-20]

A foster parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the child with other members of the child welfare team.

As a member of the child welfare team, the observations, experiences, and interactions reported by foster parents are invaluable in determining the needs of the child. Therefore, good communication is vital between the caseworker and the foster parent. Kemmerer Village recommends foster parents utilize a log to document observed behavior, obtain and maintain an updated child record folder, keep scheduled appointments, consult with the worker regularly (at least monthly and more if needed), consult with the schools as needed, and follow appropriate channels of communication.

Foster parents are taught in PRIDE training and team training that a part of being a team member includes sharing appropriate and applicable information about the child with the rest of the team members. Communication will ensure that decisions made by the team will be informed and in the child's best interest. Team members consist of the foster parent, caseworker, supervisor, support worker, therapist, and psychiatrist (as applicable), and the program director.

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2. The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.

Kemmerer Village foster parents understand and comply with the rules of confidentiality. They do not share information regarding the child or the child's family with inappropriate individuals. Kemmerer Village foster parents follow the "need to know" rule regarding information, i.e., only share information with individuals as it will affect their working with the child.

Training for foster parents on this issue is covered in pre-service and in-service PRIDE training. The Foster Family Handbook contains a confidentiality guideline for sharing information, which refers to laws and regulations governing confidentiality.

Additionally, as needed, caseworkers will inform foster parents on their assigned caseload of the implications of violating confidentiality mandates and will encourage foster parents to participate in further training on confidentiality and other related issues. Foster parents are given information regarding HIPAA regulations and their responsibilities for keeping client health information confidential. This information includes a copy of the agency's policy on HIPAA-related issues.

Foster parents are also advised of the hazards of social media. Foster parents are advised they may not share any information about the case of a youth in their care, identify a child as a youth in care, nor can they post photos of a youth in care which identify them as a foster child. Information and training regarding normalcy is provided, and they understand they can decide the level of involvement or participation on social media platforms for a young person in their care.

3. The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parent's care.

Kemmerer Village continually pursues all means by which to advocate for all clients. Kemmerer Village foster parents help identify needed services for their foster children, and they advocate with the caseworkers and other professionals on behalf of the child to obtain needed services. Kemmerer Village foster parents serve as Educational Advocates. Kemmerer Village foster parents advocate with the caseworker for the child's special needs. Kemmerer Village can assist foster parents by providing IEP support, assistance with sports fees and memberships, equestrian therapy, mentoring, summer camp, and referral services for mental health counseling and drug and alcohol counseling. Educational Advocacy training is available through DCFS and is required prior to first renewal for all licensed foster parents.

DCFS and Kemmerer Village provide training availability to foster parents regarding the appeal system and working with the juvenile court as it becomes available. This training is also available through PRIDE in-service modules.

As foster parents have the most current, applicable, and up to date information and direct observations about a child and their needs and/or presentation, Kemmerer Village encourages

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foster parent participation in Administrative Case Reviews, CIPP meetings, case conferences, court hearings, family meetings, IEP meetings, all non-routine medical and dental care, and psychiatric consultations. If foster parents wish to attend such meetings, Kemmerer Village can assist with transportation to the above-referenced appointments.

4. The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent's care and the children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.

Foster parents receive initial and on-going training regarding the support of biological family connections and family continuity with dignity and respect. Foster parents receive such training through the PRIDE program, which emphasizes family continuity as part of who the child is and how the child views himself/herself and the world. Foster parents enhance the child's identity when they support the child's continuing relationships. It is recognized that foster parents can be positive role models for the biological parent if all team members can form and maintain a positive relationship.

Kemmerer Village foster parents shall not impose their value system on children or their parents. They are trained to be aware of how his/her attitudes affect the care provided and should not make negative statements about the parent/family in the child's presence. The foster parents are trained to recognize the difference between the effects of trauma, behavioral presentation or choices, and a child's personality. Foster parents, therefore, should not confuse a dislike of behaviors with the disapproval of the child or parent. They shall treat each child as an individual with his or her strengths and needs, and unique characteristics.

Foster parents have a responsibility to treat children and their families with respect. PRIDE training addresses a child's self-esteem in Module One. Other training about developing life books and respecting the child's relationship with their birth family is also provided. Licensing standards set the expectation that children in foster care will be treated equitably and with respect as a part of being a foster family. Additionally, foster parents are invited to team meetings, trainings, foster parent support groups, individual or group education with the support worker. Foster parents and their families are invited to be part of special and holiday events at Kemmerer Village. Individual support and contact with the Director of Community Operations are available as needed and upon request.

Caseworkers monitor foster parents' treatment of children and families to ensure interactions demonstrate dignity and respect. Community service staff remain alert to monitor the attitude toward and treatment of foster children and their families to ensure that foster parents are attuned to the responsibility.

Children are always encouraged to speak to the caseworker alone about any problems or concerns they have. If the child has a therapist, the therapist will speak to the child alone and with the foster parent. DCFS requires caseworkers to speak in private with all DCFS youth in care, caseworkers make sure time is allowed. This monitoring is part of home visits, phone discussions with the foster parent, and participation in such events as court hearings, case reviews, and ACRs.

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- 5. The responsibility to recognize the foster parent's own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care, recognize the foster parent's own support needs and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.**

All licensed foster parents are required to complete the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Pre-Service training in which mutual assessment is a fundamental process. Foster parents complete an Eco-Map, which details their support needs. Placements are based on strengths utilizing the Child/Foster Parent Matching Tool. Foster parents can also utilize pre-placement visits to determine if a referred child will successfully fit into their home.

Respite care is available for all foster families. Kemmerer Village pays for two days of respite care per month for children deemed at a specialized level of care. Additional support is available for all foster parents on an as needed basis. Kemmerer Village utilizes the mutual assessment method as delineated by the PRIDE program.

Staff members who have licensing responsibilities meet in each home with the foster parents at least twice annually. One objective is to discuss any needs or concerns regarding the foster parent and the foster child. During these meetings the licensing staff and the foster parent continue the ongoing mutual assessment of strengths and challenges in dealing with foster children. Licensing staff work with the foster parent to identify appropriate training to address areas of concern and/or challenges. Foster parents can utilize the Residential Discharge Protocol implemented by DCFS when accepting placements in their homes that are step-downs from residential facilities. As part of this process, supportive contacts and in-home visitation are outlined at the time of discharge to aid in the transition process.

Ongoing training is provided for foster families in PRIDE training, foster parent conferences, support groups, community training, and via assessment by the Community Services Support Worker. It is the foster parent's responsibility, with assistance from Kemmerer Village staff, to identify the need for ongoing training and attend those that will enable them to improve their skills. All relative foster parents have the option and are encouraged to participate in all PRIDE training-and any training and support group offered by Kemmerer Village. In 2023, the value of ongoing training has been emphasized, with a shift to requiring four hours of training per year, rather than sixteen every four years for license renewal. Foster parent support groups, which include training, discussion of foster parent law, as well as fellowship, are scheduled twice every month.

The Kemmerer Village team strives to work collaboratively and collectively with all foster parents as child welfare team members. Observations and feedback regarding the children in our care and the homes in which they reside are shared by caseworkers, case aides, licensing workers, and supervisors. Communication, information, and feedback from foster parents themselves are welcome and sought. Through the combined team effort, members build awareness of the needs and strengths of each prospective home. In this way, the team can identify prospective foster parents who, for example, have expressed a particular preference for age group or gender, who have demonstrated a skill with de-escalating a youth in crisis, who easily recognize the challenges of a learning disability, or who thru patience and understanding

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have demonstrated success in working with a child recovering from the experiences of their trauma or abuse. As a result of this collaborative team awareness and communication, with the nexus being the Community Services Support Worker, Kemmerer Village can match prospective foster homes to the children in need of a home-based on demonstrated strengths and skills. In the same manner, this level of awareness allows for open communication regarding the needs or limitations of a foster home, and foster parents are not penalized for knowing and expressing their limitations. Finally, it is the role of the CSSW to monitor the needs, skills, and experiences of all foster parents (thru observation, input from other members of the team, or direct communication), and then meet with the foster parents to provide training, information, or support to help meet their needs.

6. The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.

Every foster home has received either a paper copy or online access to The Foster Family Handbook highlighting support services available for foster parents. Support workers are involved with every family early on. Support workers serve as licensing representatives, therefore working directly with any home pursuing licensure. Additionally, support workers are introduced to all unlicensed relatives at the start of every new case and serve to provide information and education, thus supporting the placement as well as the caregiver.

In the past, Kemmerer Village foster parents requested a foster parent directory which the agency created and distributed. The directory of Kemmerer Village foster parents included name, address, phone number, and license capacity. Foster parent inclusion in the directory was voluntary, by written consent. In the upcoming year, the support team will reintroduce this idea to current foster parents to gauge interest in this as an ongoing resource.

In 2015, foster parents enthusiastically requested a monthly support group. The Foster parent Support Group began in January 2016. Foster parents indicated their preference for both socialization time and topic-focused educational components for each meeting. Despite the initial enthusiasm, this group met with barriers throughout the next few years, including low attendance, staff turnover, and the appointment of a new program director. Kemmerer Village staff worked to overcome these barriers (including providing refreshments and childcare, utilizing multiple geographic locations, and various meeting times). However very few foster parents attended these groups. After a brief hiatus, monthly support groups were re-implemented in September 2016 and continued monthly, however lack of attendance remained a significant issue. Attendance gradually began to increase in 2019. The introduction of the Foster Parent Support Worker was vital to this process as this staff member reached out and communicated with foster parents on an individual basis to encourage involvement. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significantly negative impact on the training availability and attendance. Initially, all training was put on hold, and most annual events were canceled. Zoom meetings were utilized with minimal success, as foster parents worked to balance remote learning for students, virtual visits with parents, sometimes virtual contacts with caseworkers, and numerous contacts regarding the health and well-being of the members of their household. By mid-2022 participation via Zoom has become commonplace for most families. Twice monthly foster

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parent support groups and training have been reimplemented, with an option to attend either in person or via Zoom. To date, participation remains minimal (i.e., attendance by 2 caregivers one time in the past year) despite the addition of new staff with new energy.

Kemmerer Village remains committed to offering these opportunities for information sharing and growth. The agency believes all members of the team are stronger when working together collaboratively. Kemmerer Village is dedicated to continued growth among foster parents, promoting strong mentoring relationships between experienced and new foster parents, recruitment, and support of new foster parents to provide quality care for the children served. As a result, the Foster Parent Support Worker (FPSW) position was created and has evolved into an entire team. The target of this team (now Community Services Support Workers) is to meet with foster parents within thirty (30) days of initial placement, serve as a liaison, provide information and education both one-on-one and in a group setting, and serve as the primary licensing staff. The support team facilitates support group meetings and holds training opportunities monthly. Additionally, this team coordinates community-based events to recruit and support foster parents.

As anticipated, the structure of the support worker changed in 2023, to become an entire team. The Community Services Support Workers (CSSW) serves as the primary licensing representatives for the agency and meet with all new unlicensed foster parents within the first thirty (30) days of placement to provide information, facilitate licensure, and aid with the adaptation to the foster parent role. Additionally, the CSSW will assist caseworkers in all aspects in the pursuit and support of permanency, including the recruitment and training of foster parents. Of the current four-person team, one support worker is a former foster parent, and two have adopted. Three are actively enrolled in master's level education, and two worked previously as foster care caseworkers (one permanency, one intact). While the team itself is new in structure, their knowledge and experience lend to a dynamic and active engagement with caregivers. A member of the support team is also dedicated to the publication of a regular newsletter for caregivers, as well as providing regular, useful, and resourceful social media content.

The Kemmerer Village Board of Directors approved a new organizational chart that was implemented as of 01/01/2021. Consequently, some positions were retitled, additional job duties were added, and other positions were created. At that time, the Volunteer and Project Coordinator was instituted. The staff member chosen for the Volunteer and Project Coordinator role has over twenty years of experience supervising and mentoring teens and young adults, along with training in team building, conflict negotiation, and leadership. The Volunteer and Project Coordinator oversees all aspects of volunteer interactions with KV. This staff member works with Kemmerer Village management staff to identify individual and group volunteer opportunities for foster care youth coupled with engagement in the community to match individuals and groups with those opportunities. In addition, the Volunteer and Project Coordinator is responsible for recruiting volunteers as mentors for KV residents. Community volunteers can become mentors along with agency staff members. The Volunteer and Project Coordinator develops, coordinates, and manages vocational skills training for KV youth. This objective is accomplished by recruiting and coordinating volunteers who have experience in a variety of vocational skills. Through this position and the inclusion of volunteers and donations,

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Kemmerer Village events such as the Fall Carnival/Back to School Bash, Easter Egg Hunt, and Christmas Extravaganza have been a smashing success. Participation at these events is open to all homes with current youth in care as well as any other youth or family in the home.

7. The responsibility to assess the foster parent's ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

Kemmerer Village foster parents support the need for continued educational and professional development in providing care for children and recognize that ongoing professional development is a critical part of professionalism. Foster parents may have many learning needs that can be met through experience, association with other team members, Kemmerer Village library and resource center, DCFS training, and any additional outside training. Training assessment is a collaborative process with agency staff.

Kemmerer Village foster parents meet with the support worker who helps assess training needs and schedules training accordingly. Foster PRIDE in-service modules are available through DCFS, and other training provided to Kemmerer Village staff is open to all foster parents. Kemmerer Village also solicits regular feedback from foster parents regarding the training they need or would like to have. Foster parent support groups are held twice per month and include training, discussion of rights and responsibilities, as well as fellowship and information sharing. Information about additional training resources is shared by the support team and made available to anyone interested. In 2023, Kemmerer Village began the transition to an annual training requirement to help foster parents stay up to date on needs, information, and to support skills.

8. The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruptions, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family, and to provide emotional support for the foster children and members of the foster family should preventive strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.

As participating members of the professional child welfare team, Kemmerer Village foster parents will work within the team to develop and implement strategies to prevent placement disruptions for the child or children in their care. Increased casework intervention and monitoring levels are considered indicators of increased risk of placement disruptions in a foster family home. In addition to increased levels of casework, some other resources available include court systems, school personnel, CIPP meetings, respite care, family counseling with both the foster parents and the birth parents, and individual counseling. The Community Services Support Worker will work directly with the foster parent to counsel the foster parent or children individually when necessary and to provide training, education, or support regarding the needs of the home and/or child. Supervisors and the Director of Community Operations are available to meet or communicate with foster parents to provide support.

Kemmerer Village foster parents communicate openly and honestly with worker/support staff in dealing with everyday and complex behaviors. Caseworkers meet with foster parents at least monthly. Caseworkers are available by phone daily to discuss the children in their care, including

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needs, strengths, patterns of behavior, concerns, and so on. The foster parents and Kemmerer Village staff constitute a team that meets the needs of the children served.

Through training and support group opportunities, foster parents can observe positive peer modeling by other foster children, foster parents, biological children, and fellow students. Foster parents can receive suggestions in dealing with disruptive behavior, the importance of contacting the caseworker or a support staff before problems reach a crisis stage; understanding the importance of allowing a reasonable time for placement changes to occur, and become aware of how child placement changes, especially unplanned ones affect all family members, including foster and biological children. If necessary, Kemmerer Village foster parents can seek support and advice to deal with the effects of a disruptive move.

Every foster home receives contact information for their caseworker, the supervisor, the support worker, and the Community Services Department. To meet the growing needs of the population we serve, Kemmerer Village has implemented an after-hours hotline. Agency staff are assigned to after-hours coverage on a rotating basis, therefore sharing the load and responsibility. This rotating schedule is used to prevent staff burnout and safeguard personal boundaries. The after-hours number is given to all foster parents and is available during non-business hours, including weekends and holidays. For additional assistance, Kemmerer Village has access to SASS (Screening Assessment and Supportive Services) providers for the counties where Kemmerer Village foster parents reside. Agency staff can refer foster parents to SASS providers. Kemmerer Village also maintains a full-time therapist on staff who is available to assist with any after-hours crisis. The therapist can be contacted during a crisis to provide further supportive services and to help determine the need for a child to undergo the screening process. In the event of an acute emergency, foster care providers are prompted to call 911 for immediate assistance, and the caseworker, or on-call worker, if applicable, will maintain contact for follow-up, which may include phone contact or in-person contact. A determination regarding which type of follow-up is needed is made based on the circumstances at hand.

Caseworkers may refer clients for Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) services based on the needs of the case. IPS services available vary by county; however, IPS services include individual counseling and home care. While not an option for an acute emergency, IPS services are geared at support services necessary to maintain the placement. Caseworkers and foster parents will discuss IPS as an option, and if all parties agree, a caseworker will initiate the referral for IPS services. External agencies are designated by DCFS contract to provide IPS services.

As a form of support, the agency provides all foster parents with information regarding online access to the Foster Family Handbook. If the foster parents cannot access the material online, the foster parents will be given a paper copy. The Foster Family Handbook is updated periodically by DCFS to ensure that the information is current and correct. This handbook explains various topics such as the juvenile court process, health services, and education requirements for foster children in detail.

All foster parents are also provided with a Kemmerer Village organization chart, helping them see the chain of command to follow up with concerns about timely delivery of services or

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support from KV staff. Kemmerer Village staff are available to foster parents twenty-four hours a day via the on-call line.

Additionally, the agency provides foster parents with the opportunity to become knowledgeable about and capable of accessing community and other agency services, along with resources needed to prevent placement disruptions. Many of our community services staff members live in or are familiar with the foster parents' areas and can assist in identifying available community services for the foster parent. The community services staff provide individual support to help with challenging or special needs children as requested.

9. The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships and endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.

Kemmerer Village expects foster parents to become knowledgeable and understand the impact foster parenting may have on the individuals' family members, including biological children and the family as a whole. The foster parents' ability to assess and anticipate various circumstances that may result in an unusually high amount of stress is vital to understand. Stress management and the prevention of burnout is a crucial element received by foster parents during PRIDE pre-service training, mutual assessment, and ongoing training. Kemmerer Village foster parents have twenty-four-hour access to communication and contact with Kemmerer Village staff. Kemmerer Village acknowledges the possibility of foster parent burnout and offers a voluntary placement hold, through which foster parents can remove themselves from the referral process for some time without repercussion. Foster parents' licenses will remain active during this time. Agency staff also remind foster parents of the right to accept or decline any placement offered to them.

Training through PRIDE in-service Module Six --Working as a Professional Team Member is available for foster parents as a refresher to PRIDE pre-service training. Module Six training is intended to help foster parents become aware of any preconceived bias they and their family may have towards fostering children, encouragement to seek family and/or individual counseling as needed, to use the respite system as needed, and how to meet their own needs.

Foster parents are encouraged to utilize community support and resources to help reduce stress. Kemmerer Village staff (including caseworkers, supervisors, support workers, therapist, and the Director of Community Operations) are available to provide direct support to foster parents by providing information regarding community-based services, including locating community-based services, no-cost services for counseling or LifeWorks while maintaining open and effective communication.

In addition to community-based supportive services, as of September 2021, Kemmerer Village extends access to Care Now by LifeWorks to foster parents at no cost to the foster parents. This service was created to prevent burnout in foster parents and placement disruptions. Care Now is a counseling and referral service designed to help foster parents with a wide range of personal concerns. Care Now gives foster parents access to a range of free programs designed to help with anxiety, depression, stress, and topics such as financial planning. Care Now provides flexibility to foster parents to select a program that fits the foster parent's lifestyle. Foster parents can

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participate in interactive content, exercises, meditation, online assessments, podcasts, videos, and more. Care Now is accessible through LifeWorks on the web platform (login.lifeworks.com), telephone (1-800-433-7916), or smartphone app. An individual user ID is required. Foster parents can request this information from any agency staff, and information is available on the Kemmerer Village Facebook page.

Respite care in licensed Kemmerer Village foster homes is available and may be discussed at any time with the assigned caseworker for planning purposes. Foster parents caring for children requiring a specialized level of care are allotted two calendar days per month of respite care paid for by the agency. Respite foster care is temporary and not to exceed thirty days. Payment that is covered by the agency will be disbursed to the foster parent concurrent with monthly payment, provided the agency has been notified about the use of respite. If additional days throughout the month are needed for when respite care is needed, the foster parent will be responsible for payment. Foster parents who have children who are not specialized do not receive respite care paid for by the agency, however KV will support the families if respite care is needed.

10. The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families, and society that come from foster parenting and to promote the foster parenting experience in a positive way.

The required pre-service Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training exposes prospective Kemmerer Village foster parents to the rewards and benefits of foster parenting, and the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE In-Service Training Modules continue that positive exposure. Kemmerer Village believes that effective foster care services can be crucial in child development and the perseverance of children who are separated from their families. When possible, Kemmerer Village encourages foster parents to work together with the biological families to transition the children into foster care or back into the home, as addressed in the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE pre-service training. This benefits all parties included in this team effort. The children's transition is less traumatic, and the biological family sees the foster family as a positive resource.

Therefore, the agency continually strives to reflect the concept that the foster care system benefits the children in care and their families and society as a whole. Kemmerer Village foster parents are offered a recruitment finder's fee in the amount of one-hundred dollars for securing additional licensed traditional and specialized foster home resources for the agency. Additionally, foster parents are acknowledged and monetarily rewarded for their years of service.

11. The responsibility to know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the foster child, and the foster child's own family.

Kemmerer Village foster parents are aware of their role and responsibilities as foster parents for the children in their home. Foster parents work as team members in the child welfare system, supporting other team members in their functions. They respect the roles, rights, and responsibilities of all other team members. The Foster Family Handbook, to which all Kemmerer Village foster parents have access online or can request a copy, describes each team member's

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roles, rights, and responsibilities in detail. Foster PRIDE training on teamwork is also available through DCFS.

Foster parents have access to the Executive Director and the Director of Community Operations whenever an issue arises they feel needs to be addressed. The Executive Director is a member of the grievance board, which allows the foster parent to contact the agency at any time. Additionally, the strategic planning process, delineated by the Kemmerer Village Board of Directors, includes information from foster parent surveys among various other sources.

12. The responsibility to know and, as necessary, fulfill the foster parent’s responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act and to know the child welfare agency’s policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable/administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.

All Kemmerer Village foster parents and staff receive training regarding their status as a mandated reporter. Foster parents sign an acknowledgment of their role as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. A copy of the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status is included in all foster parent files, and all Kemmerer Village employee files. Foster parents sign a new form annually. Licensing staff review the responsibilities of a mandated reporter in person upon initial signing; and again at the annual review.

Mandated Reporter training is available on-demand at the DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC), which replaced the previous Virtual Training Center. The LDC can be located at <https://learning.dcf.illinois.gov/en/>. The Foster parent Handbook—discusses the mandated reporter position in-detail and includes the DCFS Abuse/Neglect Hotline phone number (800-25-ABUSE). Both the Foster PRIDE pre-service and in-service trainings cover the responsibilities mandated by The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA) while complying with Illinois law and DCFS rules and procedures requirements.

In an effort to educate, support, and protect foster parents, the agency outlines expectations of the foster parents to report all unusual incidents promptly, cooperate with any investigations involving the family, understand their limits, seek support when necessary, and not place members of their home in situations where abuse and/or neglect are likely to occur. Implications are also discussed as part of the ongoing bimonthly support and training groups. The foster parents are provided with information regarding support, official and unofficial, during and after an investigation (see pages 11-12 regarding investigations included in narrative number six). Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) are conducted by community service staff quarterly. During CFTM’s, team members, which may include youth advocates, foster parents, parent attorneys, Guardian Ad Litem for the children, and service providers, are reminded of the importance and role of the mandated reporter. All foster parents, including related and unrelated licensed foster parents, as well as agency staff, are required to complete mandated reporter training.

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If an allegation of child abuse or neglect is made against a foster parent, Kemmerer Village staff first follow up promptly to evaluate and determine the safety of the child. This determination is made via in-person contact and through the use of the DCFS Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol Safety Determination Form (CERAP). Home Safety Checklist may also be utilized to document and assess while making a determination of safety. In the event it is determined a child is unsafe, or safety cannot be immediately determined, a child will not be allowed to remain in the home. Communication regarding next steps will commence dependent on the situation and circumstances, and contingent on the outcome of any related Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation. Investigation into violation of licensing standards will also be conducted in any licensed home, with the outcome and process clearly explained and documented. It is never easy to remove a child from a home, however the safety of the child will always be the first priority of Kemmerer Village. If upon investigation it is found that no abuse or neglect occurred, and there are no un-remediated licensing violations in the home, the caseworker and supervisor will work with the foster parent regarding potential return of the child to their home. It is noted that some foster parents do not feel comfortable with the return of a child following an investigation. Kemmerer Village works with foster parents to provide education and training regarding the potential for allegations. Additionally, DCFS offers related training, such as specific training regarding attachment, teens, and adaptive responses to trauma, grief, and loss.

13. The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes, as well as any filing or time requirements associated with those proceedings, and actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.

It is the foster parents' right to attend court hearings, however, some judges may not allow foster parent admittance. Kemmerer Village foster parents are encouraged to attend court hearings; when appropriate and provide support to the child during court situations. Caseworkers provide the foster parents with court information including the date, time, and type of court hearing. Foster parents are entitled to receive notification of court hearings in a timely manner.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend and actively participate in Administrative Case Reviews (ACR). All foster parents function as members of the child welfare team and are invited to attend the child's portion of the ACR. Foster parents may attend other portions of the review, subject to confidentiality restrictions. The child portion of the ACR focuses on the children's needs, child's adjustment to his/her current placement, progress in school, medical and/or behavioral needs, participation in sibling visitation, if applicable, along with child objectives. The Child Welfare Administrative Case Reviewer will discuss the foster parent's responsibilities related to the client service plan. Kemmerer Village foster parents assist the child in meeting the child's portion of the client service plan and keep all children's records up to date. Kemmerer Village training is available on these topics annually for all foster parents and encourages foster parents' attendance at such training events through verbal requests and written invitations. To assist with foster parent participation, Kemmerer Village pays applicable registration fees for foster parents to attend training events.

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14. The responsibility to know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and the rights of foster parents under the procedure.

Each foster home has either a paper copy of the Foster Family Handbook or access to the Handbook online. The Foster Family Handbook includes: the service appeal procedure, the investigative appeal procedure, the licensing appeal procedure, and information on the Office of the Inspector General. Kemmerer Village foster parents are given a copy of the Kemmerer Village foster parent grievance procedure. Both the Foster PRIDE pre-service and in-service training cover the appeal procedures and rights of foster parents. Appeal system brochures are available for foster parents by request in the Kemmerer Village foster care office. For unresolved issues, foster parents can request assistance from the DCFS Advocacy Office. The DCFS Advocacy Office number is 800-232-3798 or 217-524-2029

15. The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child's history and progress and be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which the foster parent is licensed or affiliated.

From the beginning of a case, or upon placement of a child in a new home, a support worker meets with the foster parent to aid with the transition to the foster parent role. The support worker provides a "Welcome Packet" which includes general information about foster care and kids in care, how to become licensed foster parents, required consents, the importance of permanency, and the grievance procedure. The support worker also provides information to foster parents about DCFS involvement & guardianship, DCFS policy and practices, agency practices, levels of care, payment information, administration of medication, and documentation such as mandatory medication logs. Kemmerer Village foster parents receive information regarding Rule 402, which details the records to be maintained. It is important for the child's welfare that the foster parent maintains accurate records concerning their time in placement with them and that these records are shared with any subsequent caretakers. A nice, brightly colored expanding folder is provided for this purpose. An outline of what is expected is included in the folder. Training concerning the expectations of records to be kept is provided in pre-service and ongoing training and is a part of the licensing standards covering foster homes.

Medical records are to be kept in the Healthworks passport. The Healthworks staff or DCFS nurses provide ongoing training about Healthworks and any updates on this program.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend all trainings as a means of keeping abreast of any changes in the agency or DCFS policy and procedure. If changes are made within any policy or procedure, the assigned foster care caseworker or support worker will notify the foster parents either face-to-face or in written form. If licensing standards change, the support team or Director of Community Operations will hold meetings at various times to accommodate all foster parents. These meetings will be held in person or video teleconference to communicate the change. The Kemmerer Village Community Services Support Workers conduct training and support groups twice monthly for all foster parents. Topic of trainings which have occurred, and which are planned for future sessions include: the impact of trauma, the experiences of a child in care,

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court process and how to navigate the court system, what permanency planning means, the importance of family involvement, normalcy, behavioral interventions, mental health, attachment, DCFS rules, policies and procedures, documentation requirements, the type and purpose of meetings and appointments, the impact of technology and social media, and more. It is the goal and objective of Kemmerer Village Community Services Department for all foster parents to be informed, educated, and prepared. Kemmerer Village recognizes how difficult and overwhelming the child welfare system can be to navigate, therefore the agency strives to provide as much information and support as possible to help ease the anxieties of foster parents.

16. The responsibility to share information through the child welfare team regarding the child's adjustment in their home with the subsequent foster parent, (whether the child's parent or another substitute foster parent).

Kemmerer Village foster parents share information in a collaborative effort with subsequent foster parents. They encourage open lines of communication with subsequent foster parents and work to prepare and support the child for the transition between foster parents. Training is available regarding this issue through the PRIDE in-service Module Six --Working as a Professional Team Member. Foster parents shall assist the worker in providing all available information about the child in preparation for transition to a subsequent foster parent (foster or parent). The information to be provided to the foster parent shall include:

- The medical history of the child including known medical problems or communicable diseases, information concerning the immunization status of the child, and insurance and medical card information.
- The educational history of the child, including any special educational needs and details of the child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) when the child is receiving special education services or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan, if applicable.
- A copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions; case history of the child, including how the child came into care; the child's legal status; the permanency goal for the child; a history of the child's previous placements; and reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home foster parent.
- Other relevant background information of the child including exposure to trauma or traumatic experiences, adjustment to trauma, adjustment to previous placement(s), any prior criminal history, information relating to behavior problems such as fire setting or running away, perpetration or victim of sexual abuse, destructive behavior, substance abuse habits, and likes and dislikes.

17. The responsibility to provide care and services which are respectful of, and responsive to, the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his or her own family. The responsibility to recognize the

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increased importance of maintaining a child’s cultural identity when the race or culture of the foster family differs from that of the foster child; and the responsibility to take action to address these issues.

Kemmerer Village makes available for all Kemmerer Village foster parents the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Module Seven --Promoting Children’s Identity and Culture through DCFS. Kemmerer Village will assist foster parents in securing the internal and external resources needed to respond to individual cultural needs. Kemmerer Village has foster parents and staff who are knowledgeable in cultural diversity. Kemmerer Village provides cultural diversity training during Child and Family Team Meetings when relevant. Kemmerer Village also offers training in cultural diversity thru the Community Services Support Worker periodically through monthly training. This training is offered to all foster parents. To increase attendance during cultural diversity training, caseworkers made aware of the training schedule and asked to recommend foster family homes based on cultural needs. Kemmerer Village provides additional assistance to help facilitate communication, education, or support in regard to cultural needs or issues.

Respectfully Submitted,

Schales Nagle

Schäles Nagle, Executive Director

11/13/23

Date

Jeannie Karbach

Jeannie Karbach, Director of Community Operations

11/13/23

Date