



FOSTER PARENT HANDBOOK

**Children's Home &
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota**

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Welcome! The intention of the CH/LSS Foster Parent Handbook is to provide a cohesive guide to all clients licensed to provide foster care with our agency. It outlines the requirements, regulations and resources that can be referenced throughout your journey of being foster care licensed. Review and acknowledgement of adherence will occur annually with your CH/LSS Assigned Worker.

Terms Used

- Child: refers to any infant, child or youth in foster care
- CH/LSS Assigned Worker: Agency staff assigned to support your family through home study, licensing and placement process
- County Worker: When a child is in foster care, a primary worker is assigned from their county or tribal nation to manage the child's care. If there is a termination of parent rights, the county worker is the child's legal guardian.
- Foster Parent: all licensed foster care providers, regardless of type of placement you are open to. This refers to those seeking to provide foster care, emergency shelter care, respite and/or adopt from foster care as all require foster care licensure.
- Parent: Child's legal guardians when child enter foster care (most often, their birth/biological parents)
- Team (or Child's Team): most commonly refers to foster parents, county worker child's assigned Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and CH/LSS Assigned Worker. Depending on the case, the team could also include a child's birth parents, other county or tribal workers, Child Specific Recruiter and more.

Utilized Abbreviations

Common abbreviations that you will see throughout this document include

- DHS: Minnesota Department of Human Services
- DCYF: Minnesota Department of Child, Youth and Families
- CH/LSS: Children's Home and Lutheran Social Service of MN
- PPPC: Public Private Permanency Collaboration Contract

Questions

If you ever have any questions or concerns about items listed in this document, please contact your CH/LSS Assigned Worker.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AS A FOSTER PARENT

Your Role as Foster Parent

As a foster parent, you will provide temporary care and safety for a child placed outside of their home during a time of disruption and change. Your role is to welcome and establish a relationship with the child, their parents, and the child's team.

It is your responsibility to:

1. Provide the child with stability and structure while being safe, supportive, and nurturing
2. Ensure that the child is supported and has access to medical, dental, optical, mental health and education services and opportunities
3. Promote positive racial and cultural identity development
4. Foster cultural connections
5. Support leisure and extra-curricular activities of interest
6. Provide transportation
7. Preserve relationships with the child's family, including parent(s), siblings and other significant people in their life
8. Communicate with parents and siblings of the child, and other significant people identified in the child's life
9. Provide age-appropriate education about health, hygiene, healthy relationships, sexual development including family planning, pregnancy, prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.
10. Support the child and family's spiritual and faith beliefs and practices
11. Provide [nutritious meals and snacks](#)
12. Help the child establish positive relationships in the community
13. Serve as a school liaison for the child
14. Keep all information about the child and family confidential
15. Work as an equal on the child's team
16. Cooperate with the team to develop and implement in-home strategies that support the child in their transition, functioning and development
17. Maintain medical records for the child
18. Understand and accept mandated reporting obligations as a foster parent
19. Adhere to the CH/LSS policies and procedures, meet and abide by the licensing standards set forth by the Minnesota Department of Child, Youth and Families (DCYF) and, Council on Accreditation (COA)

References: COA FKC 9, FKC 10, FKC 11, MN 2960.3000

Rights of Foster Parents

The rights of foster parents are defined as follows:

1. Foster parents will be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as valued members of the child's team.
2. CH/LSS will provide pre-placement and child information, as communicated by the county worker, regarding the needs of children as part of the placement matching process.
3. Foster parents will work with the CH/LSS staff to determine appropriateness for care and if their family is able to meet the child's needs for placement.
4. CH/LSS Assigned Worker will work with your family to establish a crisis response plan including resources for emergency support.
5. Foster parents are an integral part of the child's team, and their observation and insights should be shared with them and taken into consideration when making decisions about the child.
6. Foster parents should be informed of court hearings, child's case planning, visitation and service decisions made by the child's legal guardian (either parent(s) or county) and courts.
7. Information regarding Northstar Care for Children and foster parent reimbursement will be provided to foster parents. Reimbursement will be processed in a timely manner to the foster parent by CH/LSS or the child's county.
8. CH/LSS will assist foster parents with building a support network that includes plans for respite, transportation, childcare, etc.
9. The program will provide information and access to the training necessary for foster parents to maintain licensing requirements, provide quality care and treatment specific to the needs of children in their home.
10. CH/LSS will provide foster parents and children in care with a Grievance Policy and Procedure for people served by the foster care program to file a formal complaint or grievance that cannot be resolved through informal discussion.

References: COA FKC 19

Communication

As a foster parent, you are an important member of the child's team. The team could consist of the child, their parents, county worker, probation officer, guardian ad litem, and CH/LSS Assigned Worker, and other professionals working with the child.

As members of a team, foster parents are responsible for consistent and frequent communication. All team members have a common goal – to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children placed in out of home care. Open communication will contribute to improved outcomes. If you have a concern about care, services or an individual on the team, including the child, please call your CH/LSS Assigned Worker.

Foster parents and CH/LSS Assigned Worker should:

- Communicate often
- Respect each other's roles
- Make decisions & solve problems together

- Resolve conflicts
- Maintain appropriate & professional communication

CH/LSS staff have two business days to respond to phone calls or emails. In the situation that your CH/LSS Assigned Worker is not available for an extended period (i.e. time off, medical leave) you will be provided with the names and contact information for an alternative staff while they are unavailable.

References: COA FKC4, MN 2060.3320 Subp.1, MN 2960.3080 Subp.10

Confidentiality

To develop and sustain a positive, trusting relationship that protects the rights, privacy and dignity of the child and family, foster parents must keep the child's and birth family's social history and personal information confidential. Confidential information includes information furnished by the county, the county worker, the child, the child's birth family. The information may concern the family background of the child, the child and family's medical history and condition and/or the services provided to the child.

These matters cannot be discussed with foster family's friends, neighbors, or relatives, nor with any other professional who is not specifically authorized to receive the information with written consent. A Confidentiality Statement must be read and signed by each foster parent.

All confidential information must be kept in a secure location such as a locked file box. Foster parents should dispose of the information after it is no longer needed (not moving forward with match, after placement ends, etc.) and not request additional information when no longer caring for the child, if applicable.

CH/LSS will secure releases of information to discuss concerns about the child to agencies such as school personnel, psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors, and other professionals that are providing service to the child.

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Children in foster care have the right to be physically and emotionally safe. They also have a right for their basic needs to be met as well as their medical and mental health needs met. Useful links for further reference include the [Foster Youth Rights](#) and the [Sibling Bill of Rights](#). The additional sub-sections summarize additional rights for children in foster care.

Child's Right to Privacy

It is important not to infringe on the foster child's rights. Department of Human Services (DHS) regulations protect the following privacy rights of children in foster care:

- Mail: A child has a right to open, send or receive mail. A foster parent cannot censor or open the outgoing and incoming mail of children. It may be recommended by a mental health professional or county worker that a foster parent be present when opening mail if there is reasonable cause to suspect that the mail contains an unauthorized, dangerous or illegal substance of any kind.
- Media: Permission must be obtained from the child's legal guardian (either parent or county worker) before a child can be involved in newspaper and social media articles that would identify the child as a foster child.
- Phone: A foster child has the right to access a phone. They may receive or refuse any calls. The time, duration and cost may be structured or guided by the child's team. Except at the child's request, foster parents or other team members should not listen in on a child's conversation. Restrictions for phone use, as well as appropriate privacy and location settings, must be approved by the child's team and documented in the child's file.
- Photographs: Permission must be granted to allow a foster family to take pictures or videos of their foster child in their day-to-day or school activities. Foster parents may not share or post photos on social media of foster children without permission from child's legal guardian.
- Room Searches: Room searches should not be conducted without permission and understanding. If there is a reason that warrants consideration of a room search, it should be discussed with the child's team. Searches of a child's property may be made only when there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child has in their possession: an item belonging to someone else, an item that is a crime or an offense to possess (exs weapon, firearm, controlled substance or illegal drugs) and any article that may be dangerous to the child or others in the home.
- Social media: The use of social media within each home will be discussed at the time of licensure as well as at the time of each placement. Teams will determine the level of social media use that each child in placement may have as well as an appropriate amount of supervision for that use. Foster parents have the right to establish expectations regarding social media within their home and should make this known at the time of licensure.

Cultural Factors & Connections

Children who have been placed outside their home have the right to maintain their cultural identity and connections. It is important that foster parents be culturally sensitive and willing to support the child's race, ethnicity, culture, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith and spiritual beliefs.

Cultural factors that may affect family life include attitudes toward or perceptions of:

- Gender expression and gender identity
- Socio-economic status
- Race and ethnicity

- Religion, faith and spirituality
- Education
- Language and communication
- Family structure
- Customs, traditions and holidays
- Recreation, music and food

Foster Parents are expected to support the continuation of cultural practices of the children placed in their care and home.

References: COA FKC 10, MN 2960.3080 Subp.4F

Driving Privileges

To encourage normalcy, children in foster care may be allowed to drive if they have met all the legal requirements to obtain a driver's license and insurance. The decision to allow a child to drive and means to do so while in care will be made as a team.

Driving other modes of transportation such as snowmobiles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, boats, etc., must be approved by the child's guardian. If permission is granted, the child must complete a safety course before driving vehicles.

References: COA FKC 10

Religious and Spiritual Practices

CH/LSS appreciates and supports the spiritual needs and beliefs of everyone. Foster children are free to express and practice their religious or spiritual beliefs.

Foster parents will:

- Respect a child and their family's faith and spiritual beliefs and practices
- Provide children in foster care with the right to participate, or not participate, in religious or spiritual practices
- Make necessary accommodations including transportation, supervision and schedule adjustments to meet the child's religious, faith or spiritual needs

References: MN 2960.3080 Subp.4J, MN CFC Licensing Guidelines VII.17

Reasonable & Prudent Parenting Standard

In an effort to remove barriers to normalcy for foster children, foster parents are responsible to support a child's emotional and developmental growth by permitting them to participate in activities or events that are generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age, or developmentally appropriate for a child, as required by Minnesota Statutes, section 260.212, subd 14. Foster parents will be trained in how to apply the reasonable and prudent parenting standard prior to

licensure.

Developmentally appropriate activities are based on a child's cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group. Foster parents are permitted to apply the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to allow a foster child's participation in extracurricular, social and cultural activities typical for a child's age, or are developmentally appropriate. Sleepovers, should be discussed as a team regarding developmental appropriateness, history of the child, and how best to support the youth.

References: COA FKC 10, MN 260.212 Subp.14, MN 2960.3090 Subp.6

REVIEW OF LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Compliance Expectations for License Holders

As a reminder, families with an open child foster care license are expected to remain in compliance with all child foster care rules and regulations ([Minnesota Rule 2960](#)), regardless whether you have placement. We encourage foster parents to review the rule and the [MN Child Foster Care Licensing Guidelines](#), in addition to being familiar with the contents of this handbook.

Assessment of Concerns

In the event CH/LSS receives information regarding a potential licensing violation, the agency is required to further assess the report. The severity of the information received will determine what type of follow-up CH/LSS must do. Gathering and assessing the information could include a licensing investigation. It is important to remember that a licensing investigation is not an accusation. The purpose of the investigation is to gather additional information to assess if a potential licensing violation did or did not occur.

Examples of child foster care rule not being followed include, but are not limited to, the following.

Please note this is not an inclusive list.

- Families did not complete annual training
- Report received of corporal punishment being used on a child
- Background check disqualifications
- Reports of abuse or neglect
- Inadequate or inappropriate supervision of a child

Licensing Investigation Outcomes

The possible outcomes of a licensing investigation include determining that a licensing violation did not occur, that a licensing violation did occur, or that a determination cannot be made. When it is determined that a licensing violation did occur, a licensing action must be taken. Examples of licensing actions include:

- Correction order

- Conditional license
- Fine
- Temporary immediate suspension
- Indefinite suspension
- Revocation

Please ask your CH/LSS Assigned Worker if you have any additional questions. You are encouraged to review the Child Foster Care Rule and the CH/LSS Agency Services Contract.

References: COA FKC 14.08, MN 2960

Criminal Background Studies

Criminal Background studies will be conducted on all adults and children 13 years of age and older living in the household (not including children in foster care). Background studies will be conducted using NetStudy 2.0 as required by MN Department of Human Services. All adult household members living in the home are required to complete an Adam Walsh, fingerprint base background study which includes a photo.

Background studies generally are not repeated while the license is maintained, but a background study update may be requested.

Background studies must also be completed for:

- All household members 18 years or older
- Children 13 years and older
- Roomer and Boarders
- Persons who may be caring for a foster child for more than 72 consecutive hours
- Persons who may be regularly staying/visiting your home. For example, relatives from out of town who visit frequently and stay in your home, frequent overnight guests, etc.

References: MN 2960.3060 Subp.2

Drug & Alcohol Use

Foster parents are responsible for providing a positive, healthy, nurturing environment. This includes role modeling appropriate behavior.

Foster parents are required to complete a DHS Individual Fact Sheet which addresses chemical use (including alcohol or substance abuse, abuse of prescription-controlled substances, and use of illegal substances) and current or history of treatment. If chemical use by a foster parent impairs their ability to provide appropriate care, CH/LSS may request a chemical dependency evaluation. Upon completion of the evaluation, the foster parent will be required to follow all recommendations.

Failure to comply with recommendations could result in a licensing action, removal of the foster child from the home and may place your ability to provide foster care for this agency at risk.

References: MN 2960.3060 Subp.3

Fire Marshal Inspection

Applicants for foster care may be required to complete a fire inspection by the State Fire Marshal. The fire inspection fee will be incurred by the family seeking to become foster parents.

If the license applicant does not meet the minimum requirements of [MN Uniform Fire Code](#), the license applicant must complete all corrections recommended by the State Fire Marshal. The license applicant must complete the corrections according to the specified timeline recommended by the Fire Marshal. License recommendation cannot be completed until the fire inspection and corrections have been satisfactorily completed and a written report has been received from the State Fire Marshal.

References: MN 2960.3050 Subp.2, MN Department of Public Safety

Inactive Licenses & Activity Expectations

The intention of having a foster care license is to be a safe and stable resource for children in foster care. CH/LSS expects foster parents to engage in the matching and/or placement process upon becoming licensed. This includes regular communication with your CH/LSS Assigned Worker, conversations about potential children within your openness and/or taking placement. Should families not engage as expected, CH/LSS has the option to close a foster care licensed home for inactivity after 12 consecutive months or longer. We do not recognize an “on hold” status for foster parents. If there are barriers to your engagement, consult with CH/LSS Assigned Worker.

References: MN 245A.055

License Renewal

Foster care licenses are initially valid for one year which is then increased to two years following the first license period. An exception to this is if families are focused on adoption/permanency through the Public Private Permanency Collaboration (PPPC) contract. If a family, at the start of their license process, is interested in adoption and will be active in matching focused on permanency, their initial license period can be two years. There are certain steps that must be taken annually and others that occur during the relicensing year. The “off” year (meaning the year in which a full relicense is not being completed), an annual evaluation will be done.

Annual Evaluation

Annual evaluations of the licensed home will be conducted by CH/LSS Assigned Worker. They typically occur in the home. The documented annual evaluation will include:

- Review and/or update of a few documents, including this handbook
- Re-check of home environment through Home Safety Checklist and adherence to annual well-water test (if applicable)
- Confirmation that 12 hours of annual training per applicant was completed
- Obtain placement evaluation from county, if placement has occurred

- Discussion with CH/LSS Assigned Worker about the past year of activity

Relicensing & Home Study Update

Relicensing happens at least every two years and occurs prior to the expiration of the foster care license. There may be other scenarios in which a relicense is required (such as a move, a significant life change, etc.). The relicensing and home study update will include:

- Update of a foster care licensing documents
- Review of Statement of Intended Use, Foster Parent Agreement, Foster Parent Handbook and Provider Policies
- Re-check of home environment through Home Safety Checklist and adherence to annual well-water test (if applicable)
- Updated Medical and Counseling Reports for all household members (not placed foster youth)
- Confirmation that 12 hours of annual training per applicant was completed
- Obtain placement evaluation from county agency, if placement has occurred
- Discussion with CH/LSS Assigned Worker about the past year of activity

References: MN 2960.3100 Subp.2

Mandated Reporting Obligations

As a foster parent caring for children, you become a mandated reporter and are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. If you suspect that a child in your care is being neglected or abused by anyone, follow the mandated reporting process and notify the child's county worker.

Reporting Process

Suspected maltreatment of a minor or vulnerable adult should be verbally reported within 24 hours. The report should be made to the child protection intake in the county in which the abuse occurred. This [DHS County and Tribal Child Protection Directory](#) can be used to identify which phone number to call for each county and tribe in Minnesota.

Within 72 hours of your verbal report, a written report must be completed and sent to the child protection social service agency. After a report is made, you must notify your CH/LSS Assigned Worker and child's team that a report has been submitted. It is your responsibility to make the report; your CH/LSS Assigned Worker or another member of the child's team cannot make it for you.

Mandated Reporting Training

Foster parents are required to complete annual training on mandated reporting guidelines. This can be found at the [Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy](#). The Department of Children, Youth and Families have also developed a [Resource Guide for Mandated Reporters of Child Maltreatment Concerns](#).

References: MN 260E.06

Notification Requirements

Foster parents are required to notify licensing agencies (CH/LSS Assigned Worker) when there are any changes to the foster home, foster parents or any household members that affect the terms or ability to provide care. See Incident Report section of this guide for additional items that require immediate notification.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following in relation to any household member:

- Addition or change in household members (*including placement of foster child*)
- Visitors staying in the home for over a week
- Treatment or hospitalization for medical or mental health needs
- Involvement with law enforcement or child protection
- Change in employment or financial resources

References: MN 2690.3020 Subp.7

Smoke-Free Environment

Foster parents will ensure a smoke-free environment in their home for foster children. This is inclusive of the home, adjacent structures (i.e. deck, garage) and vehicle when transporting a child according to MN law. The foster parent is responsible for themselves and others in the home, adjacent structures, and vehicle to ensure all parties remain smoke-free to avoid secondhand smoke.

References: MN 260C.215 Subp.9

Substitute Care & Babysitting

Substitute care refers to someone else caring for the foster child in the foster home for an overnight or longer. Any time substitute care is being used, it should be communicated with and approved by the child's county. As always, use good judgement in determining who may be appropriate to care for the child. The substitute caregiver must be able to meet the developmental, physical, social, and emotional needs of the child on a short-term basis.

The more notice of substitute care being planned for/needed, the better. In non-emergent situations, the foster parent, county and child's parent (depending on the situation) must agree on arrangements at least 10 days prior to the use of substitute care. If more urgent substitute care is needed, please communicate that ASAP. The foster parent is expected to inform CH/LSS and the county worker of any planned or completed times using substitute care.

Education is required for substitute caregivers on age-specific topics listed in the Training Requirements section below. If medical equipment training is required for the specific child, there needs to be documentation that this training was given to the substitute caregiver prior to care occurring.

Information to give to substitute caregivers:

- Home safety: The location of the home's fire extinguisher and first aid supplies; emergency and

fire evacuation plans; names/phone numbers of emergency contacts; people child is allowed to have contact with.

- Child safety: Information about the child's history only as would be relevant for the substitute caregiver; the child's daily routine & schedule; information about mandatory reporting laws.
- Medical needs: List of any allergies or medical issues; the schedule and location of prescribed medications as well as request a record of administration.
- Emergency: If an emergency occurs, the substitute caregiver must notify the county ASAP.

There are various types of substitute caregivers that are classified by the length of time they are providing care.

Long-Term

When a caregiver is going to provide more than 72 hours of continuous care for a foster child, this is considered long-term substitute care. Here are the requirements of long-term substitute caregivers:

- Substitute caregiver must be at least 18 years old
- Substitute caregiver must have background study completed
- In addition to applicable age-specific training, long-term substitute caregivers must also complete Children's Mental Health and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders training.
- If substitute caregiver is more than 30 cumulative days of care in a 12-month period, there are additional requirements.

Short-Term

When a caregiver is going to provide less than 72 hours of continuous care for a foster child, this is considered short-term substitute care. Background study is not typically needed. This is a great opportunity to use your natural supports! We encourage this to be your first choice.

Babysitting

Short-term care/supervision of a foster child that is less than 24 hours is typically referred to as babysitting. This can occur in the foster home or the home of the babysitter. Anyone 14 or older can be used as a babysitter (if you determine them to be able to appropriately meet the needs of the child). This can include a child of the foster family, relative, or neighbor.

Foster Child as Babysitters

Children in foster care over the age of 14 are allowed to babysit. Here are things to consider when determining if a foster child can babysit other children:

- Consider the child's history and apply Normalcy & Prudent Parenting standards
- Is the foster child interested in babysitting?
- Are they independent enough to be left alone? What supervision do they need?
- Are they sufficiently reliable, mature and capable enough to meet the needs of other kids for a short period of time?
- Have there even been any concerns with the child supervising/being left alone with other youth?

Respite care

Respite is defined as temporary/short-term care of foster child in a licensed foster home other than the foster home in which a child is placed. This is often confused with substitute care and many times it is used interchangeably even though it is technically different than substitute care (due to the location of the care and the license status of the substitute caregiver). Our agency can assist in identifying respite but cannot guarantee it will be located. We encourage you to use natural support whenever possible!

References: MN 2960.3090, [Respite and Substitute Care for Family Settings- Definitions and Requirements](#), [Children in Foster Care: Babysitting Guidelines DHS-7830-ENG](#)

Training Requirements

Prior to becoming licensed for foster care, each foster parent is required to complete at least 16 hours for Foster Care & Adoption Education and CH/LSS Orientation. The training ensures the foster parent meets licensing requirements and receives guidance and support to meet the needs of a child placed in their care.

Foster parents seeking to take placements with LSS Host Homes are subject to additional placements Treatment foster parents are required to complete 30 hours of pre-service orientation and meet eligibility criteria to be a licensed as a Treatment Foster Parent.

Age-Specific Training

Additional initial training may be required based on what age child you are open to caring for. Foster parents open to the care of child age 8 or younger are required to complete certified Best Education for Safe Travel (BEST) prior to licensure and every 5 years. Foster parents open to care of a child under age 6 are required to complete Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) training prior to care of a child under 6.

Ongoing Training

The minimum continuing education requirement is 12 hours per foster parent on an annual basis. Use of CH/LSS *Training Log* is required to track adherence. It is strongly recommended that training occurs throughout the year. Training hours may be obtained by attending agency hosted trainings, community-based trainings, books, webinars relevant to fostering or adopting.

- CH/LSS has pre-recorded on demand webinars for free: [On-Demand Webinars - CH/LSS](#)
- CH/LSS clients can access online training from [Creating a Family](#) for free with code **CHLSS17**
- CH/LSS licensed foster parent become a member of [MN Quality Parenting Initiative \(QPI\)](#) with access to training, resources, and networking
- Additional community training and education opportunities are shared on a regular basis

Identified training should be a combination of in-person, live online/virtual, webinar, books, etc. Consultation with a child's therapist, teacher, medical professionals, and other professional service providers may be applicable in-service hours if personalized guidance is being provided to the foster parent about the individual needs of the child. Review and approval by CH/LSS Assigned Worker is required for all ongoing training.

PLACEMENT PROCESS

There are a variety of placement options for foster parents working with CH/LSS. You may be open to one or more, and revisit placement openness throughout your process. Sometimes a placement may start as one type and evolve to another over time.

- **Foster Care Adoption:** Purpose of placement is permanency for a child with a termination of parental rights. This often involves a more extensive information gathering process ahead of making placement decision. Upon placement, foster parents will be signing an Adoptive Placement Agreement solidifying their intent to adopt. Placements duration is often six to nine months prior to finalization of the adoption
- **Foster Care:** Purpose of placement is stability while working towards reunification with parents or relatives. Placements vary in length, need, urgency and outcome.
 - **Emergency Shelter Care:** Short-term, immediate placements that can happen any time of day or night. These placements are typically shorter-term than traditional foster care.
 - **Respite:** Short-term (such as several hours, overnight or weekend), generally pre-arranged care for kids experiencing foster care or who were adopted from foster care.
 - **Treatment Foster Care:** Placements vary in length and outcome but require a higher level of care. To be licensed as a Treatment Foster Home, you must have provided Traditional Foster Care for 2 years and meet additional training requirements.
 - **Host Homes:** In coordination with LSS's [Host Homes](#), we can license caregivers who are providing support to youth with 245D waived services.

Decisions about Placement

Foster parents are involved in the decision-making process. Licensure does not guarantee placement, and foster parents have the right to refuse placement of a child. It is best to discuss placement questions, concerns, and preferences in a holistic way as a family unit.

Most placements are made through the CH/LSS and the county, and not directly with the foster parents. However, **counties and foster parents should be informing and consulting with CH/LSS regarding potential for placement**. Emergency shelter placements could be an exception to this. However, foster parents must notify the licensing agency within 24 hours of accepting placement of a child (including providing respite).

Some things to consider prior to accepting a placement:

- Type, volume and distance of services needed for child
- Location, frequency and type of visitation and reunification goals, if applicable

- Current school or daycare setting and distance from your home
- Level of supervision required and care needs
- Readiness of home environment

References: MN 2960.3080 Subp.1, MN CFC Licensing VII.1, DHS Agreement between Foster Parents and Child Foster Care Licensing Agency

Placement Considerations

Your CH/LSS Assigned Worker will partner with you to determine appropriate match and capacity to meet the needs of a child in need of out-of-home placement. A request for placement (known as a referral) is made to CH/LSS by a county or tribal worker or other referral source. CH/LSS Staff then contact foster families about potential placement options.

Placement Factors

The child's county is ultimately responsible for making placement decisions, *not CH/LSS*. Oftentimes they may have multiple interested families in placement for children. Minnesota Statue lists the factors that must be used in determining which placement is the most appropriate for a child. All factors should be considered and may be interrelated.

The factors that must be considered are:

1. Child's current functioning and behaviors
2. Medical needs of the child
3. Educational needs of the child
4. Developmental needs of the child
5. Child's history and past experiences
6. Child's religious and cultural needs
7. Child's connection with a community, school and faith community
8. Child's interests and talents
9. Child's current and long-term needs regarding relationships with parents, siblings, relatives and other caretakers
10. Reasonable preference of the child if deemed child is sufficient age to express preferences

Considerations for Native Youth

For youth enrolled or eligible for enrollment in a Native Tribe, compliance with Indian Child Welfare Act and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act is also required in placement decision-making. Additionally, placement of a child cannot be delayed or denied based on the race, color or national origin of the foster parent or the child.

References: MN 260C.212 Subp.2B-C, 260.755 Subp.2A, MN 2960.3080 Subp.1

Capacity Limits

Placement decisions also need to align with foster parents' capacity (number of foster children allowable by license). Placement also must also be consistent with the specifications outlined in the Statement of Intended Use. The following limits include:

- Foster home must have no more than six foster children
- The maximum number of children allowed in a home is eight, including a foster parent's children
- A ratio of one adult for every five children must be maintained
- A foster home must have no more than three children who are under two years of age or who are non-ambulatory
- A foster home must have no more than four foster children at one time, if any of the children have severe or profound development disabilities, have severe emotional disturbance, or are assisted with medical technology

Potential Capacity Variance Options

In unique circumstances, a variance can be issued for capacity or ratio. This is up to the discretion of CH/LSS. A variance may be granted to allow placement, in excess, of the capacity of a foster home only if one of the following special circumstances applies:

- There is a need to place a sibling group together in the foster home
- There is a need to place a child with foster parents with which the child had been previously placed
- There is a need to keep parenting foster youth with their child
- A family with special training or skills to provide care for a child who has a severe disability
- Preference is given to placing children in their home community
- Respite care shall be included in your license capacity limits

References: MN 2960.3030

Sleeping Arrangements

A foster child must be provided with a dedicated bedroom and appropriate sleeping spaces. A foster child must not be assigned to sleep in an area of the home that is a shared living space and not dedicated to sleeping, i.e. living room, trailer, or other structure that is separate from the foster family home.

A foster child must not be assigned to an unfinished attic, an unfinished basement, or a hall or any other room normally used for purposes other than sleeping. Bedrooms that are used by foster children must have two exits. Foster children must also be allowed a space for their own belongings. This may be a dresser or closet that the foster child may use as their own while in your home.

References: MN 2960.3040 Subp.2-3

Caring for Older Youth

Children may continue in foster care past their 18th birthday and remain until the age of 21, which is often referred to as Extended Foster Care. Youth must be engaged in school, employed or engaged in a postsecondary or vocational education if capable in order to be eligible for Extended Foster Care.

To provide care for youth over the age of 18, foster parents must complete additional licensing requirements including training and completion of additional documents. Please consult with your

CH/LSS Assigned Worker if this is something you are interested in, prior to placement of a child over the age of 18.

References: MN 260C.451

Foster Child Information

Before placement or within five days following placement, CH/LSS will work to ensure foster parents has access to the following information about the child:

- the child's placement history
- name and nicknames
- date of birth
- gender identity and sex
- name, address and telephone number of the child's parents, if involved
- race or cultural heritage of the child
- description of the child's presenting problems including safety issues, medical problems, mental health concerns and circumstances leading to placement
- name, address and telephone number of the contact person for education purposes
- spiritual or religious affiliation of the child
- information about the child's medication and diet needs
- recent health care providers

Foster parents must keep all confidential information secure. Only foster parents have the right to have access to child information. Foster parents agree to not discuss or disclose information to any person not involved in the child's care. Foster parents will dispose of child information if placement ends, and the child is no longer in your care.

References: COA FKC 7, COA FKC 11, MN 2960.3080 Subp.4, Agreement between Foster Parents and Child Foster Care Licensing Agency

WELCOMING CHILD INTO FOSTER HOME

The beginning of a new placement can be an overwhelming and exciting time for foster parents. This section breaks down expectations, requirements and tips to set everyone up for success. It is important to remember that while foster parents have physical custody, decision-making regarding medical, educational and therapeutic decisions remain with the child's guardian (birth parent or county).

Adjustment to New Environment

The child who comes into your home will need to adjust to many things. There are new caregiver(s), a new house and neighborhood, new rules, new foods and possibly a new community and school. It is

difficult for a child to leave their home and surroundings. A child may be grieving the losses they are experiencing at the time of placement into a foster home. The child needs your understanding, patience and support when settling into your home.

In addition to spending quality time with the child during their adjustment period, you may consider any of the following to help ease the child's transition:

- Introduce the child to your family and show them around the house.
- Allow the child to unpack in their own time, offer to help and let them know where to put things when they are ready
- Let a child personalize their room
- Complete an inventory of a child's personal items shortly upon arrival
- Explain the rules and norms of the household
- Maintain normalcy and consistency so a child knows what to expect and can settle into a routine as quickly as possible
- Give the child a tour of the neighborhood and introduce them to others, if applicable
- Contact your CH/LSS Assigned Worker if problems arise

References: COA FKC 7, MN 2960.3080 Subp.6D

Comfort Calls

When a child enters foster care or a new placement when there is not a termination of parental rights, it is recommended that a call between the child's parent(s) and foster parents take place within 48 hours after the child has been placed. Children are not usually present on the call. The primary purpose is establishing partnership between the caregivers to open the door to ask questions during the difficult time of initial separation. County workers should attempt to coordinate this call, advise on appropriateness and assist with logistics and initiation of contact. More information can be found at [Quality Parenting Initiative - Comfort Call Resources](#).

Some foster parents prefer to have their personal number remain private. Setting a Google Voice account (or similar tool) allows you to use different phone number when communicating with birth family. Instructions to [set up](#) Google Voice and [route to send/receive calls](#) from your number can be found in the Google Voice Help Center.

References: MN 260C.219 Subp.6, Quality Parenting Initiative – Minnesota

Medical Care

Upon placement, foster parents will obtain a child's medical information including their Medical Assistance number, known allergies or other medical concerns. Prior to or at the time of placement, the county worker will determine whether a child has had a physical, dental and optical examination within 12 months of placement. If the child has not, it is the foster parents' responsibility to ensure that the child has an examination within **30 days of placement** and annually after that examination date.

If the child has received care before, foster parents should obtain all current provider information and

details about upcoming appointments, including for therapists and other services. If possible, foster parents will maintain established care to ensure continuity for the child. If that is not doable or care is not yet established, foster parents are to work in conjunction with the child's county worker to identify providers for necessary services.

Resources to identify new providers include:

- [DHS Minnesota Health Care Program Provider Directory](#): allows you to search for various types of providers and treatment needs available to those on MA
- [Minnesota Dental Association](#) has lists of dentists either in Metro or Greater MN accepting MA
- [Adoption Medicine Clinic](#) at University of MN provides innovative and comprehensive care to families with children who are adopted or in foster care. They also have an [Adolescent Resource page](#) outlining mental health resource options.
- [Foster Adopt Minnesota](#) (FAM) offers a therapist search tool or connect their [HELP Program](#) for personalized assistance to identify a good fit.

Foster parents can make routine decision-making and seek treatment in urgent situations. However, specialty care or procedures (psychotropic medications, anesthesia, gender-affirming care, surgeries, etc.) need to be pre-approved by the county. Foster parents must adhere and provide access to any required or approved care.

As a foster parent, you are required to maintain a record of illness report by the child, action taken by the foster parent and date of the child's medical, psychological, or dental care with the CH/LSS *Medical Record Log*. Examples of items listed could include primary care visit, fever, offered Tylenol, etc. It is important to communicate with your CH/LSS Assigned Worker and the child's county worker about any injuries, bruises and unexpected medical treatment.

Form: Medical Record Log

References: COA FKC 11, MN 2960.3080 Subp.5, MN 9560.06

Medication Management

Managing and administering medication is the responsibility of foster parents. Training on medication administration is required for foster parents annually. Foster parents may give appropriate over-the-counter medication, as needed, according to the manufacturer's label.

All [scheduled II medications](#) are required to be locked securely in a safe container. Storage of over-the-counter medications should be determined based on the child's needs.

Prescribed medications used to treat a child must be ordered by a doctor or consulting psychiatrist. It is important that you understand the purpose of the medication, side effects, and communicate to the team any medication updates. Foster parents may not give, change or discontinue any medications, vitamin supplements and natural remedies unless directed by a physician. Make sure the school has any medication if it needs to be taken during school hours.

References: MN 9560.06, MN CFC Licensing Guidelines VII.9

Personal Items Inventory

It is recommended that foster parents and child inventory their belongings upon placement. This is a way for you and the child to list the items brought into your home. The inventory will assist you in determining the child's current clothing needs. The inventory may also be used to record new items purchased for the child during placement. It will be useful in making sure the child takes all their personal items at the time of departure from your home, if applicable. It will eliminate confusion and disagreement about what items were with the child at the time of placement. All items gifted or purchased specifically for the child are considered their personal items and would depart with the child if they were to leave your home.

References: MN 2960.3080 Subp.3

School Enrollment

Continuity of schooling is in the child's best interest and may be required by the county. This could include expectations that foster parents provide transportation to and from. The child's legal guardian (either their parent or county) has educational decision-making.

However, children that are placed in foster care often experience school transfers and educational disruptions. It is important that the transition into a new school district proceed as quickly and efficiently as possible. To allow for information and records to be transferred to the new school, the following procedure will be followed:

- A signed release of information will need to be obtained from the county worker. Then, the foster parent will contact the school about enrollment steps.
- The foster parent will supply the school with the name of the child and the address of the school where school records can be requested from.

The foster parent will be responsible for ongoing relationships with the child's teachers and administrators in the child's school. It is the foster parents' responsibility to monitor school attendance, homework, and academic achievement, to actively participate in educational planning for the child and to work with the school to address behavioral or academic problems. The foster parent should support and encourage the child's involvement in extra-curricular activities. County and foster parents should clarify who is able to have contact with and transport children to and from school.

References: COA FKC 10.09, MN 2960.3080 Subp.5

DAILY LIFE WITH FOSTER CHILD

Child Care

Foster parents are responsible for identifying any necessary childcare for children in their home. If your family is open to placement of a child that would require childcare (including before- and after-school

care), it is best to solidify a plan upon becoming licensed. It is in your best interest to make inquiries into daycare facilities, tour potential options, and set up a plan for care before an opening may be available. Funding varies significantly by county, child and scenario. It is important to inquire about this when considering placement. [Parent Aware](#) is a helpful resource to identify providers that use research-based practices; some counties require providers to have a specific rating on Parent Aware.

Child Passenger Safety Law

Foster parents are required to adhere to the [Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Child Passenger Safety Law](#) and be appropriately trained when transporting children. Use the [Child Restraint Guidance Chart](#) for assistance. In addition to the law, consult your car seat and vehicle owner's manuals for proper use.

Notable aspects of the safety law include:

- Children ages birth to at least 2 years old must be in a rear-facing car seat
- Children ages 8 and under are required to be in a car seat/booster
- Follow safety tests to demonstrate seat belt fits correctly
- Children under 13 years old must sit in back seat, if possible

References: MN 169.685

Court Proceedings

When children are in foster care, periodic reviews of the case are held in court. Foster parents will receive notice about hearings and may attend. Consult with the county worker if you are questioning attendance. We recommend reflecting on your intention for attendance to ensure it focuses on meeting the needs of the child in your home. More information about various hearing types and participation in court can be found at: [Guide to State District Court Proceedings for Relatives and Foster](#).

References: MN 260C.202-204

Developing and Maintaining Connections

All foster children have the right to maintain contact and relationships with their families. Foster parents will assist the child in maintaining contact and preserving relationships with their family (including previous caregivers and siblings) and friends. Create a plan with county workers to determine who is deemed safe and appropriate to maintain contact with. Foster parents will actively work towards preserving these relationships.

Visitation

For foster care placements where reunification is the goal, family contact is critical to success. Parents who have regular and meaningful visits have the best chance of reunification with their child. In addition to visits with family members, it is important to allow a child to maintain connections with other important people and networks in their life. This may include but is not limited to the following

areas: school, church, daycare, sports teams, etc.

The child's team will determine a visitation plan for the child. Foster parents must adhere to the visitation plan and work collaboratively with the county team and child's parents on visits. In collaboration with the county, supplies for child's care during visitation may need to be provided. Visitation planning will be a coordinated effort, and the team shall consider the following factors:

- Location of visits
- Proximity to/from families
- Frequency and length of the visit
- Responsibility for transportation (which may often be by foster parents)
- Responsibility for supervision of visit, if required
- Coordination of sibling involvement or additional visits, if applicable

Foster parents are prohibited from cancelling or restricting contact as a disciplinary action. A child and their family shall not be denied contact unless court and case plan ordered. At times, there may be problems that arise around the visit. Foster parents should notify the CH/LSS Assigned Worker and child's county worker of any significant issues or concerns that arise. For example:

- Parents do not attend scheduled visit
- Parents are consistently late for the visit transition
- Child exhibit significant dysregulation during the transition, visit or post-visit
- Parents bring an unauthorized person for visit

Maintaining Contact

When reunification is the priority, it is encouraged that foster parents work to keep the child's parents informed about the child while in care. Consider ways to share photos, provide updates about milestones and activities, and honor relationships on birthdays and important holidays. As family preservation efforts progress, the child's parents and foster parents may attend appointments or activities together.

If any issues or concerns are reported regarding visits, it is your responsibility to inform the child's team in a timely manner. While visitation and contact can be difficult, it is important to maintain and support ongoing relationships as it is in the best interest of the child. Seek support from your CH/LSS Assigned Worker if you need guidance.

References: COA FKC 7-8, MN 2960.3080 Subp.9, MN 2960.3320 Subp.1

Discipline

Foster parents must abide by the following discipline policy. Foster parents must consider the child's abuse and trauma history, developmental, cultural, disability, and gender needs when deciding the disciplinary action to be taken in the care of each child.

Foster parents must refrain from using corporal or any degrading type of punishment. Each foster home must have a written individual family discipline policy that is specific to that home. This policy will be based on the guidelines below.

Children must not be subjected to:

- Corporal punishment including, but not limited to rough handling, shoving, ear or hair pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, hitting, throwing objects at the child or spanking.
- Verbal abuse including, but not limited to: name calling, derogatory statements about the child or child's family, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or culture, or statements intended to shame, threaten, humiliate or frighten the child.
- Punishment for lapses in toilet habits, including bed wetting or soiling.
- Withholding basic needs, including, but not limited to a nutritious diet, drinking water, clothing, hygiene facilities, normal sleeping conditions, proper lighting, educational services, exercise activities, ventilation and proper temperature, mail, family visits, positive reinforcement, nurturing or medical care. However, a child who destroys bedding or clothing, or uses these or other items to hurt the child's self or others, may be deprived of such articles according to the child's case plan.
- Assigning work that is dangerous or not consistent with the child's case plan.
- Disciplining one child for the unrelated behavior or action of another, except for the imposition of restrictions on the child's peer group as part of a recognized treatment program.
- Restrictions on a child's communications beyond the restrictions specified in the child's treatment plan or case plan, unless the restriction is approved by the child's case manager.
- Requirements to assume uncomfortable or fixed positions for an extended length of time, or to march, stand, or kneel as punishment.

The license holder:

- Must not require a child to punish other children
- Must follow the child's case plan regarding discipline
- Must not use physical holds or restraints without pre-approval from county and specific training on how to do so properly
- Must not use mechanical restraints or seclusion with a foster child
- Must ensure that the duration of time-out is appropriate to the age of the child

Any incidence of a restrictive intervention in a licensed CH/LSS home will be reported to Minnesota DHS, report to maltreatment, and an internal agency investigation. Each incident is reviewed by the local director and reviewed by the Senior Director. If warranted, the incident is escalated to the internal organization Critical Incident team. Foster parents should also complete an *Incident Report* about the incident.

Form: Incident Report

References: MN 2960.3080 Subp.8

Educational Well-Being

Foster children's education well-being must be maintained while in foster care. Foster parents are required to facilitate a child's school attendance and enroll the child in a local school district or, if appropriate, the child's district of residence. Stability in a child's home school is the preference for foster youth, whenever possible.

Foster parents should help children achieve their full educational potential through actively engaging

in child's schooling, consistently communicating with school professionals, advocating for educational assessments and/or an individualized education plan when needed, helping with homework and/or connecting child to tutoring.

Traditional home-schooling is rarely permitted for children in foster care due to educational stability and the need for additional services. If desired, foster parents must consult with CH/LSS Assigned Worker and child's county workers if they would like to homeschool any placement in the home.

References: COA FKC 10.09, MN 2960.3080 Subp.5

Pets

It is recommended that children interacting with pets must be supervised, until they become acclimated to each other, as children do not always know or demonstrate appropriate boundaries with animals. Consider temporarily relocating pets with a support person to allow for adjustment, or if any issues arise.

Pets in a foster home must be immunized and maintained as required per local ordinances and [state laws](#). Foster homes with reptiles, chickens or ducks as pets must ensure thorough handwashing protocol and are unable to take placement of children less than six years of age.

References: MN 2960.3050 Subp.4

Personal Appearance

Foster parents should provide access to all basic needs related to hygiene and grooming. A child may also need assistance with skin, dental and hair care. Foster parents must provide children with the necessary hygiene items and assistance needed. Permission must be granted by the child's legal guardian (either parent and/or county worker) for any modifications to appearance including, but not limited to, haircuts/styles, body piercings and tattoos.

References: MN CFC Licensing Guidelines VII.8

Preservation of Placement

Foster parents are required to support placement stability for children in care for as long as the placement is needed. Foster parents are advised to inform CH/LSS Assigned Worker and child's county worker if issues arise that cannot be resolved between foster parents and child. Prior to requesting removal of a child, foster parents must attempt to preserve placement and work to determine if additional strategies or support services may resolve issues.

When all resources are exhausted, provide the child's county worker with sufficient time (45-60 days, if possible) to plan for discharge and new placement.

References: COA FKC 7, 2960.3080 Subp.11

Supervision

Carefully supervise children new to your care until you know more about their needs. Additionally, foster parents are required to know the whereabouts of any foster children in their foster home. Guidance from the child's county worker can assist in determining supervision needs.

Home surveillance/security cameras in the home must be pre-approved and used for safety. They cannot be a replacement for supervision.

References: MN 2960.3080 Subp.5

Travel

Permission must be granted by the child's county for a foster child to travel outside of Minnesota. Written pre-approval is required so be mindful when planning trips out of the state. CH/LSS Assigned Worker and the county must be aware when a child is not sleeping in the licensed foster home.

International travel needs to be pre-approved by the court and plenty of time will be needed to obtain a passport. If there is going to be a change in the child's name, it would be advised to wait to obtain a passport until that has happened.

Team Meetings Schedule

Team meetings are scheduled to develop, assess and review a child's care and placement needs. They will address the child's well-being, presenting problems, current services, care plan priorities, and permanency goals. These typically occur in the form of a monthly post-placement visit to the foster home. The following meeting schedule will be followed:

- **Pre-Placement Meeting:** When possible, it is best to have a pre-placement meeting with the child's team to best understand their needs and placement goals. Placement support will be planned by CH/LSS staff and the child's team to ensure a smooth and successful transition. This is often not plausible for emergency placements due to urgent need.
- **Initial Placement Visit:** This meeting will occur within the first week of the child's move-in date. Areas to review include but are not limited to: immediate needs, placement logistics, pertinent medical or health information, medications, upcoming appointments, birth family contact, school enrollment, and other care planning.
- **Ongoing Post-Placement Visits:** Ongoing visits will occur monthly to address child and family's needs, progress towards goals and address questions or concerns. CH/LSS Assigned Worker will work to coordinate post-placement visits with the remainder of the child's team to reduce the number of monthly visits as others are often required to conduct monthly visits as well. Discussion of medical updates and incidents will occur. The goal would be to have at least Quarterly Team Meetings. Placement care planning will continue throughout the duration of placement or until a finalized adoption, if applicable.
- **Discharge Team Meeting:** A discharge team meeting will be scheduled, if possible. At this meeting, goals are reviewed and transition planning to ensure continuity of services and care is established. This should also include a discussion of if, and how, foster parents will maintain

connection with the child.

References: COA FKC 5, MN 260C.212 Subp.4A, MN 2960.3310, MN 2960.3320

Termination of Placement

When a placement ends, for whatever reason, all the child's belongings, including any items purchased for or gifted to them, will depart with the child. Foster parents are required to provide all private information obtained about the child while in care to the county and then destroy from their records. This includes deleting or shredding all documents and notes related to the child. Foster parents should also remove their contact information from child professional and medical records as they are no longer the child's caretaker.

CH/LSS also has a Major Life Event requirement outlined in the FCA Services Contract. We strongly encourage families complete a period of at least one year from any major life event (divorce, birth, adoption or custody of child, death of child or spouse, disruption of placement, etc.) prior to beginning or resuming the process with CH/LSS to assess the stability of the household.

Reference: MN 2960.3080 Subp. 11, FCA Services Contract

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Emergency Care

Emergency coverage plans will be established upon child placement with the team's input. In the event of an emergency, please defer to the following resources based on the nature of an emergency:

- Mental health: [Children's mental health crisis response phone numbers](#) by location
- Law enforcement (non-emergency, emergency 911)
- Medical emergency (hospital, clinic or 911)

If a situation should arise not requiring this level of intervention, but requiring agency attention, you should notify a CH/LSS Assigned Worker and county. As a reminder, CH/LSS has a two-day response time and is not to be relied on for after-hours or weekend assistance.

Runaway or Missing Foster Child

If a foster child runs away or is missing, the foster parent is required to report a minor missing and is responsible for alerting appropriate authorities. The duration of time when whereabouts are unknown prior to alerting authorities depends on the child's age and capabilities. Notification includes law enforcement, the child's county and CH/LSS Assigned Worker. The child's team will determine who will be alerting the child's parent, if applicable.

It is not your responsibility as a foster parent to search for the child beyond reasonable efforts as a

concerned caregiver. If you have information as to the whereabouts of the child, it is expected you will share any information that may be helpful in locating the child. When a child is located, it is expected for them to return to care unless indicated otherwise by the child's county. A 45-60 notification of placement ending is still required in these circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the foster parent to take necessary precautions to prevent a runaway or missing child or youth by appropriate supervision specific to age, developmental needs, and risk. A foster parent shall consider the structure of your home, schedules, supervision, relationships and influences that are protective factors for children.

References: COA FKC 14, MN 260C.212 Subp.13, MN 2960.3080 Subp.6

Incident Reports

As a foster parent, you have a responsibility to share information on exposure to potentially harmful situations, incidents, and injuries (from minor to severe), including bumps and bruises. An *Incident Report* must be completed within two days of the incident occurring.

Significant concerns or severe injuries, including but not limited to the list below, should be reported to CH/LSS **immediately as we are obligated to alert DHS.**

- Death, near death or serious injury of foster child or any other household member
- Law enforcement involvement at the foster home
- Sexual contact between any foster child in the home and any other household member
- Assault or physical abuse, incidents with firearms, or significant substance abuse impacting safety of any child in the home
- Emergency relocation of family away from the home
- Incidents that may receive media attention

Form: Incident Report

References: MN CFC Licensing Guidelines VII.23

Criminal Activity

If a foster child is involved in a criminal act or is suspected of being involved in any illegal activity, foster parents must notify the child's team, complete an *Incident Report* and notify appropriate authorities.

When law enforcement or child protective services are investigating the possible criminal activities of a child in foster care, foster parents must fully cooperate with authorities.

Form: Incident Report

BENEFITS FOR FOSTER PARENTS & CHILDREN

Foster Provider Liability Insurance

As a licensed foster parent of Minnesota, you are automatically enrolled in a free liability insurance program through the state of Minnesota. The insurance may cover anything you are legally obligated to pay as the result of injury or damage while providing foster care.

This includes:

- Injury to someone by a foster child
- Injury to foster child for alleged negligent care by the foster parent
- Damage to someone else's property caused by foster child
- Damage to foster child's property

The following exclusions are not covered:

- Damage to any property that is owned by, rented to, or leased by the provider or anyone in the foster parent's household
- Damages arising out of an act or omission that a reasonable person would know is likely to result in injury or property damage
- Any injury or property damage resulting from the operation or use of auto, aircraft or watercraft
- Damages arising out of sexual abuse or molestation

References: Minnesota Joins Underwriting Association (MJUA) [Foster Provider Liability Insurance](#)

Northstar Care for Children

[Northstar Care for Children Act](#) is a state law that assists families (foster, adoptive, kinship) that are caring for children by establishing a uniform set of benefits and processes in support of permanency for foster children. Three primary benefits are included under Northstar Care:

1. Medical Assistance
2. Monthly basic payment, based on child's age
3. Monthly supplemental payment, based on uniform assessment, Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY)

Medical Assistance

All children in foster care are automatically eligible for Medical Assistance (MA). Eligibility continues as long as a child receives Northstar Care benefits (including after adoption). County workers should provide foster parents with a child's MA number prior to or at placement.

MAPCY aka Monthly Payments

A child receives a monthly basic rate based on their age as defined by the State. This then gets translated into a daily rate (per overnight). Most children then also receive a monthly supplemental payment, based on the level from their MAPCY assessment. This reimbursement is considered non-declared income.

The MAPCY assessment should be completed within the first 30 days of a child's out-of-home placement and needs to be completed for each placement in foster care by the county with the foster parent. MAPCY is the uniform tool that assesses the following per placement:

- Child's needs in your care
- Foster parents' unique parenting and care to meet those needs

The reimbursement is intended to be used to meet the child's needs. This includes, but is not limited to, food, toys or activities, hygiene, gifts, allowance, bedding, car seats, wardrobe as child grows and seasons change. A portion of the rate is intended to also account for increased household costs such as electricity, water, internet, etc. In general, mileage is considered meeting the child's needs and foster parents would be expected to use MAPCY to offset travel additional costs incurred.

Miscellaneous/Supplemental Expenses

As described above, the monthly rate is intended to be used for all expenses related to the child. However, there are some very limited expenses that could be reimbursed separately, and they may vary by child's county of guardianship. This could include some portions of drivers training, special hair or hygiene, cell phone, special events or equipment costs, etc. These would require prior approval and again vary significantly by county.

Clothing Allowance

It is the foster parent's responsibility to use a portion of monthly reimbursement to maintain a child's wardrobe as they grow, and seasons change. However, some youth may qualify for Clothing Allowance. If needed, a clothing allowance request can be submitted to the referring county or tribal social worker. The clothing allowance may vary in amount. Receipts may be requested for purchases made by the county workers for reimbursement. It is the foster parents' responsibility to provide the necessary clothing for the foster child during the duration of the placement.

Foster Parent Reimbursement Process

Some counties prefer to pay the rate to CH/LSS then have CH/LSS issue foster care reimbursements to families. If this is the case for your placement, you will be notified by CH/LSS shortly upon placement. For those cases, foster parents will submit their *Foster Care Reimbursement Form* to billing@chlss.org on a monthly basis. The form is to be reviewed for accuracy. Once the approval process has been completed, the reimbursement will be processed by CH/LSS. Your reimbursement payment be processed within 10-15 business days. New placements will not be reimbursed until the MAPCY rate is known. This could result in a month or two delays of payment.

Form: Foster Care Reimbursement Form

Nutrition Assistance

School Lunches

Foster children are usually eligible for school lunches at free or reduced rates. Contact the county worker and school for information to access this benefit.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

Children in foster care, under the age of five, may be eligible for WIC. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program provides vouchers for free food, including formulas, fruits and veggies, cereal, milk, eggs and more. For more information and to apply for a child under five placed in your foster home, visit [WIC Program](#).

References: MN Department of Education, MN Department of Health

Other Attractions or Activities

It is worthwhile to inquire whether companies or organizations have scholarships or discounts for foster parents and/or children in foster care. Examples include MN Zoo, Children's Museum, etc.

FOSTER PARENT(S) ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I understand that as a foster parent licensed by Children's Home & Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (CH/LSS), I am required to abide by DHS rules and regulations as articulated in Statutes Chapter 2960.3000 – 2960.3340. I also agree to comply with items articulated in this Foster Parent Handbook and understand that they exist for the purpose of providing the most environment possible and safety for foster children.

I understand the pivotal role that I may play in a child's life, and I intend to assure that through the process of placement, care, and discharge, I will always keep the child's best interest in mind and comply with established best practices.

Signature of Foster Parent 1

Printed Name of Foster Parent 1

Date

Signature of Foster Parent 2 (if applicable)

Printed Name of Foster Parent 2

Date