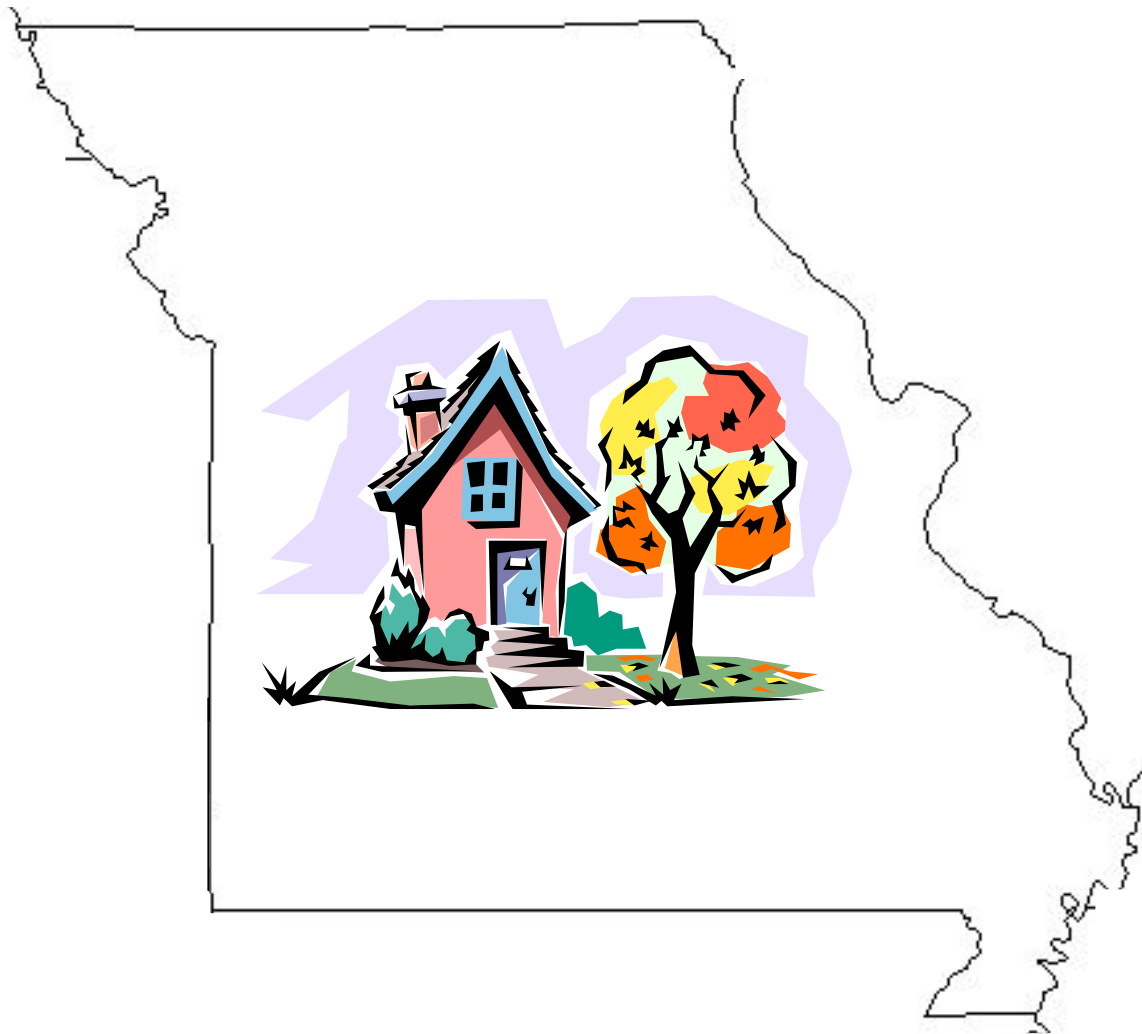


Missouri Resource Parent Handbook



*Department of Social Services
Children's Division
Missouri State Foster Care Advisory Committee*

The Children's Division
and the
State Foster Care Advisory Committee
would like to express their
deep appreciation to
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by Elizabeth Tattershall

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PURPOSE

Resource parents are foster parents, relatives and/or kinship care providers who are licensed by the Missouri Children's Division to provide 24-hour care for children in the legal custody of the state.

This handbook is available to resource parents to provide quick and easy access to important information. We have made an

attempt to provide you with a great deal of information, but we are certain this book does not contain the answers for every situation. **Please note that policy is subject to change and you should contact your local office for any clarification.**



The Missouri Children's Division (CD) and the Missouri State Foster Care Advisory Board (SFCAB) are committed to improving communication. If at any time you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact your licensing worker, Children's Service Worker (CSW), or another resource parent.

During the course of your foster parenting, you will become part of a team comprised of caseworkers, resource parents, law enforcement agencies, court officials, therapists, doctors, schools, biological families and, of course, children. Your participation in team meetings is vital in assuring quality child welfare services to Missouri's children. With so many people involved, there will be times when not everyone agrees. Please keep in mind your opinion does matter and speak up! Together we can provide the safety, permanency and well-being that every child deserves.

MISSION

The mission of the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) Children's Division is to partner with families, communities and government to protect children from abuse and neglect and assure safety, permanency and well-being for Missouri's children. (Developed by the 2003 Children's Division Steering Committee.)

TEAM APPROACH/TEAM MEETINGS

As a resource parent you are a vital member of the Family Support Team (FST) and the Permanency Planning Review Team (PPRT) which meet regularly to make recommendations for children placed in your home. The FST and PPRT each have different intents and required timeframes.

Upon a child entering the state's custody the worker should be meeting with the family within 24 hours of initial placement. Your participation may be necessary to provide or gather information about the child. A Family Support Team meeting will be held within the first 72 hours, and 30 days of initial placement to establish a visitation plan for the parents and children to visit each other and to develop a case plan. FSTs are then held every 30 days until court adjudication and as needed, or required, thereafter.

The intent of the FST is to determine service and treatment needs; determine the need for the appropriate placement of the child, and to develop a reunification plan or other permanency option. Evaluating case progress and revising the case plan as needed are discussed at FSTs. FSTs are also held prior to or within 72 hours of a change in a child's placement.

The Permanency Planning Review (PPR) Team has different timeframes than the FST. PPRTs are to be conducted prior to the date of the child's sixth month in care and every six months thereafter. At least one person not



responsible for the case management of or delivery of services, to either the child or the parents must participate in the PPR. The intent of a PPR is to determine:

- The safety of the child
- The continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement
- The extent of compliance with the case plan
- The extent and progress which has been made in alleviating or mitigating the causes necessitating placement in foster care; and
- To project a likely date by which the child may be returned to and safely maintained in the home or placed for adoption or legal guardianship.

Working as a member of a professional team can be challenging for various reasons. The issues we are working with are emotionally charged. There are many parties and factors involved - different agencies, the legal system and birth family. Sometimes there is conflict between the legal responsibility and the attachment the child has with resource families. Different team members come not only with their expertise, but also with their own perspective, and teamwork may be a new idea for some which can be overwhelming.

While teamwork is definitely challenging, there are some guidelines or concepts to help the team better achieve their goals. Team members need to share child welfare values and respect for child welfare laws. When team members value the child's relationships, it is easier for the team to work together toward supporting those relationships. Likewise, when there is an understanding of the legal issues in child welfare it helps team members to better understand the mandate and responsibility of the agency. In issues as emotionally charged as attachment, separation and loss, and child abuse, there will not always be shared values.

Different members of the team have different expertise to offer. The use of complementary skills is one of the greatest values of teamwork. But

members, by virtue of their differing roles and skills, also come to the team with different perspectives. Perspectives do not need to be judged right or wrong, but rather need to be considered as part of the overall decision making. If the team does not value its members' perspectives, valuable information may be lost and the child will suffer from that loss.

Team members need to have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives in working with children and families and ensure these are shared among team members. When you are a team member, you cannot base your actions on your own assessment of a situation. The team needs to share information and ensure there is a common understanding of the goal and the work to be done to achieve that goal.

There is a common misperception that teamwork is a natural occurrence instead of a process that takes practice.

Let's take the challenge and practice teamwork for our kids!

FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Per RSMO 210.566)

1. (1) The Children's Division and its contractors, recognizing that foster parents are not clients but rather are colleagues in the child welfare team, shall treat foster parents in a manner consistent with the National Association of Social Workers' ethical standards of conduct as described in its Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues. Foster parents shall treat the children in their care, the child's birth family and members of the child welfare team in a manner consistent with their ethical responsibilities as professional team members.

(2) The Children's Division and its contractors shall provide written notification of the rights enumerated in this section at the time of initial

licensure and at the time of each licensure renewal following the initial licensure period.

2. (1) The Children's Division and its contractors shall provide foster parents with regularly scheduled opportunities for pre-service training, and regularly scheduled opportunities for pertinent in-service training, as determined by the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board.

(2) The Children's Division and its contractors shall provide to foster parents and potential adoptive parents, prior to placement, all pertinent information, including but not limited to full disclosure of all medical, psychological, and psychiatric conditions of the child, as well as information from previous placements that would indicate that the child or children may have a propensity to cause violence to any member of the foster family home. The foster parents shall be provided with any information regarding the child or the child's family, including but not limited to the case plan, any family history of mental or physical illness, sexual abuse of the child or sexual abuse perpetrated by the child, criminal background of the child or the child's family, fire-setting or other destructive behavior by the child, substance abuse by the child or child's family, or any other information which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to protect the foster or adoptive family. Knowingly providing false or misleading information to foster parents in order to secure placement shall be denoted in the caseworker's personnel file and shall be kept on record by the division.

(3) The Children's Division and its contractors shall arrange preplacement visits, except in emergencies.

(4) The foster parents may ask questions about the child's case plan, encourage a placement or refuse a placement without reprisal from the caseworker or agency. After a placement, the Children's Division and its contractors shall update the foster parents as new information about the child is gathered.

(5) Foster parents shall be informed in a timely manner by the Children's Division and its contractors of all team meetings and staffings concerning

their licensure status or children placed in their homes, and shall be allowed to participate, consistent with section 210.761.

(6) The Children's Division and its contractors shall establish reasonably accessible respite care for children in foster care for short periods of time, jointly determined by foster parents and the child's caseworker pursuant to section 210.545. Foster parents shall follow all procedures established by the Children's Division and its contractors for requesting and using respite care.

(7) Foster parents shall treat all information received from the Children's Division and its contractors about the child and the child's family as confidential. Information necessary for the medical or psychiatric care of the child may be provided to the appropriate practitioners. Foster parents may share information necessary with school personnel in order to secure a safe and appropriate education for the child. Additionally, foster parents shall share information they may learn about the child and the child's family, and concerns that arise in the care of the child, with the caseworker and other members of the child welfare team. Recognizing that placement changes are difficult for children, foster parents shall seek all necessary information, and participate in preplacement visits whenever possible, before deciding whether to accept a child for placement.

3. (1) Foster parents shall make decisions about the daily living concerns of the child, and shall be permitted to continue the practice of their own family values and routines while respecting the child's cultural heritage. All discipline shall be consistent with state laws and regulations. The Children's Division shall allow foster parents to help plan visitation between the child and the child's siblings or biological family. Visitations should be scheduled at a time that meets the needs of the child, the biological family members, and the foster family whenever possible. Recognizing that visitation with family members is an important right of children in foster care, foster parents shall be flexible and cooperative with regard to family visits.

(2) Foster parents shall provide care that is respectful of the child's cultural identity and needs. Recognizing that cultural competence can be

learned, the Children's Division and their contractors shall provide foster parents with training that specifically addresses cultural needs of children, including but not limited to, information on skin and hair care, information on any specific religious or cultural practices of the child's biological family, and referrals to community resources for ongoing education and support.

(3) Foster parents shall recognize that the purpose of discipline is to teach and direct the behavior of the child, and ensure that it is administered in a humane and sensitive manner. Foster parents shall use discipline methods which are consistent with Children's Division policy.

4. (1) Consistent with state laws and regulations, the Children's Division and its contractors shall provide, upon request by the foster parents, information about a child's progress after the child leaves foster care.

(2) Except in emergencies, foster parents shall be given two weeks advance notice and a written statement of the reasons before a child is removed from their care. When requesting removal of a child from their home, foster parents shall give two weeks advance notice, consistent with division policy, to the child's caseworker, except in emergency situations.

(3) Recognizing the critical nature of attachment for children, if a child reenters the foster care system and is not placed in a relative home, the child's former foster parents shall be given first consideration for placement of the child.

(4) If a child becomes free for adoption while in foster care, the child's foster family shall be given preferential consideration as adoptive parents consistent with section 453.070, RSMo.

(5) If a foster child becomes free for adoption and the foster parents desire to adopt the child, they shall inform the caseworker within sixty days of the caseworker's initial query. If they do not choose to pursue adoption, foster parents shall make every effort to support and encourage the child's placement in a permanent home, including but not limited to providing information on the history and care needs of the child and accommodating transitional visitation.

5. Foster parents shall be informed by the court no later than two weeks prior to all court hearings pertaining to a child in their care, and informed of their right to attend and participate, consistent with section 211.464, RSMo.

6. The Children's Division and their contractors shall provide access to a fair and impartial grievance process to address licensure, case management decisions, and delivery of service issues. Foster parents shall have timely access to the child placement agency's appeals process, and shall be free from acts of retaliation when exercising the right to appeal.

7. The Children's Division and their contractors shall provide training to foster parents on the policies and procedures governing the licensure of foster homes, the provision of foster care, and the adoption process. Foster parents shall, upon request, be provided with written documentation of the policies of the Children's Division and their contractors. Per licensure requirements, foster parents shall comply with the policies of the child placement agency.

8. For purposes of this section, "foster parent" means a resource family providing care of children in state custody.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There are some questions that are asked quite often. This is a short list of questions pooled from resource parents like you. The page numbers following the questions will help you find the answers.

1. How can resource families practice teamwork? (2)
2. When and how does the child visit with his/her family? (42)
3. When can I give permission for a foster child to do something? (12)
4. What is a placement packet? (11)
5. How am I involved in the child's education? (44)
6. Can a foster child join us on our family vacations and trips? (41)
7. What is appropriate discipline? (36)
8. What is a lifebook? (37)
9. What is respite? (54)
10. Who consents to routine and emergency medical care? (23)
11. What if the child requires mental health services? (30)
12. Who is eligible for WIC? (29)
13. How do I receive mileage reimbursements and clothing vouchers?(19-21)
14. If I work, can a foster child be in child care? (17)
15. Are there any local supports for resource parents? (56)
16. Can a child receive mail and phone calls from the parent? (44)
17. When does a child have to ride in a car safety seat? (39)
18. How do I receive the maintenance payment? (16)

