



Aitkin County Health & Human Services

Handbook  
for  
Foster Care Providers



We are pleased to be able to offer this Foster Care Providers Handbook. As a foster care provider, you make an important contribution to the Agency and to the child and their family.

The Agency is hopeful that you will find this handbook helpful in your role as foster care provider. It is designed to be used as a guide when you have specific questions and also provide a general overview of the Aitkin County Foster Care Program.

Please contact the licensing worker whenever you have questions regarding the foster care program.

Aitkin County Health and Human Services Mission Statement:

*To assist citizens, preserve families, and  
promote dignity, safety, health, responsibility, and self-sufficiency.*

Goal of Foster Care:

To remedy the presenting problem(s) and reunite the family is the primary goal of a foster care placement. There may be circumstances when this may not be possible, such as in the case of a child awaiting adoption or that of a child whose legal custodian has not complied with the case plan and the court has determined that another placement is necessary.

Periodically, we will be sending you new information in order to keep your handbook current. Upon receipt of the new material, please replace the new information and discard the old.

## Table of Contents

Definitions.....	6
Agreement Between Foster Parents and Placing Agency .....	7
Alcohol and Drug Use Policy.....	7
Babysitting Guidelines .....	7-8
Background Checks.....	9
Carbon Monoxide Detectors.....	9
Car Seats .....	9
Changes in your household.....	9-10
Clothing.....	10
Initial Clothing Allowance.....	10
Minimum Clothing Standard.....	10-11
Data Privacy.....	11-13
Dental Care .....	13
Discipline Policy.....	13-14
Driver’s Education/Minors Driving.....	14
Education .....	14-15
Firearms.....	15
Foster Care Reimbursement .....	15
MAPCY Domains.....	15-16
Grievance Procedure Against the Agency .....	16
Grievance Procedure for Foster Children.....	16-17
Guardian ad Litem Visits.....	17
Hair and Hygiene.....	17
Injury-Incident Reports.....	17
Insurance Coverage .....	17-18
Internet .....	18
Internet and Foster Children.....	18
Internet Risks .....	18
Internet Safety and Usage for you and your foster child.....	18
Mandated Reporting .....	19

Medical Care.....	19
Medical Coverage .....	19
Mileage Reimbursement .....	19
Medical Mileage Reimbursement.....	19
Non-Medical Mileage Reimbursement.....	20
Moving.....	20
Parent and Child Visits .....	20
Pets .....	20
Phone .....	21
Piercings and Tattoos .....	21
Prescription Payments.....	21
Relicensing .....	21
Respite Care .....	21-22
Runaway/Missing Child .....	23
Safe Sleeping Environment.....	23-24
School Lunches.....	24
Sexual Boundaries.....	24
Smoke-Free Requirements.....	24-25
Social Media Guidelines.....	25
Social Media Ties.....	25
Social Worker Visits.....	26
Television and Video Games.....	26
Training .....	26-27
Other Training Resources .....	27-28
Recording your Training Hours .....	28
Travel .....	28
Vision Care.....	29
Well Testing .....	29
WIC .....	29
Acknowledgement of Receipt of Foster Care Provider Handbook.....	31

## Definitions

<u>Social Worker:</u>	A worker from the supervising agency that will be placing a child into foster care and supervising the development of the case plan.
<u>Child:</u>	The term in this handbook refers to foster child/children of either sex.
<u>Child’s Legal Custodian:</u>	This is the person the court has granted legal custody to. This could include parents, birth parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.
<u>Correction Order:</u>	A written document issued by the Department of Human Services to a licensed foster home to assist the home to remedy a violation of a licensing rule or law.
<u>DHS:</u>	Department of Human Services
<u>GAL:</u>	Guardian ad Litem. Guardians ad Litem are appointed by the Court in CHIPS cases and sometimes in delinquency and custody cases. Their purpose is to provide the court input regarding the “best interest” of the child/children.
<u>License:</u>	The document issued by the Commissioner of Human Services authorizing the applicant to provide services described for a specific period of time.
<u>Licensing:</u>	The process of the assessment, education and preparation of the applicant by the licensing agency to assure the requirements of the license are met.
<u>Licensing Worker:</u>	The social worker responsible for the licensing and supportive services for foster homes and their families.

What does it stand for?	
CHIPS – Child in Need of Protection or Services	DHS – Department of Human Services
GAL – Guardian ad Litem	ICWA – Indian Child Welfare Act
IEP – Individual Education Plan	MA – Medical Assistance
MAPCY – Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth	TPR – Termination of Parental Rights
WIC – Women, Infant and Children	

## *Agreement Between Foster Parents and Placing Agency*

A child's foster care provider and the agency supervising the child's placement in foster care share responsibility for the care of the child. They must work together to ensure that the standards and policies set forth by law and the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services are met. To accomplish this, the foster care providers and the agency need to understand not only what is expected of them, but also what they may expect of one another.

When you sign the Agency Agreement, you agree to comply with those terms. Failure to comply could lead to correction orders, child removal and/or negative action, including the revocation of your license.

## *Alcohol and Drug use Policy*

Requires that an applicant or license holder must have a policy that prohibits license holders, employees, subcontractors and volunteers, when directly responsible for persons served by the program, from abusing prescription medication or being in any manner under the influence of a chemical that impairs the individual's ability to provide services or care. The license holder must train employees, subcontractors, and volunteers about the program's drug and alcohol policy.

[Minnesota Statute 245A.04]

If drug use is suspected from a foster care provider, the social worker can request a urinary analysis from the foster care provider. The licensing worker can request a Chemical Use Assessment of the foster care provider. If the foster care provider refuses, social workers, licensing workers, supervisors, attorneys and Health & Human Services Director will discuss the next plan of action based on the current circumstances.

## *Babysitting Guidelines*

As a foster care provider, it is your responsibility to ensure that children in your care receive appropriate supervision while living in your home. When it is necessary to be absent from the home for a short time, appropriate babysitting arrangements must be made for your own children and foster children in your care.

Babysitting is considered short-term care and supervision of children **for less than 24 hours** that occurs on an occasional basis; it may be in the foster home or in the home of a babysitter.

When hiring a babysitter, apply the Reasonable Prudent Parent Standard when assessing and selecting a babysitter. Use the same good judgement in determining if a person is appropriate to occasionally babysit a foster child that you would use in considering someone to care for your own children. When hiring a babysitter, it is important to consider a foster child's age, physical, development and social needs. The babysitter you choose must be capable of meeting all of the needs of each child. Anyone age 14 or older whom you know to be sufficiently

reliable and mature may care for foster children. This may include your own children, a relative, or neighbor. The length of babysitting time depends on the maturity and needs of each child and the maturity of the babysitter.

It is good practice to inform the responsible agency about plans for using babysitters. Plans for babysitting do not need to be included as part of the out-of-home placement plan.

Foster care providers are encouraged to provide and support age and developmentally appropriate experiences for foster children and youth. Apply the Prudent Parent Standard to determine if a foster youth is permitted to provide occasional supervision for other children, including your own children, if they are interested in providing care and are sufficiently responsible to do so. Allowing a foster youth to provide occasional supervision to other foster children in your home requires careful consideration. Discussion with the child's Social Worker as part of case planning is encouraged to ensure they are developmentally prepared for this responsibility. Youth who have been sexually aggressive or physically assaultive, or have other restrictions related to unsupervised contact with children, may not babysit.

If you choose to use a babysitter, a background study is not required.

Babysitters are not required to complete training, although CPR and first aid training may be helpful. A foster home's discipline policy should be reviewed with a babysitter.

Basic guidelines for using a babysitter include:

- Meet the babysitter in advance.
- Ensure a babysitter is mature enough to handle common emergencies and provide first aid.
- Have a babysitter spend time with you before babysitting to meet the children and learn their routines.
- Show a babysitter around the house. Point out fire escape routes and potential problem areas. Instruct a babysitter to leave the house with the children right away in case of fire and call the fire department from a neighbor's house.
- Discuss the children's feeding, bathing and sleeping arrangements with babysitter.
- Tell your babysitter about any allergies or specific needs of each child.
- Have emergency supplies available including a flashlight, first aid chart and supplies.
- Tell the babysitter where you will be and how long you expect to be gone. If you will be gone longer than expected, contact the sitter.
- Ensure you have an operable phone in the home. Post your address, phone number and emergency numbers near the phone.
- Provide the phone number of a neighbor, or someone else who can assist in an emergency, if you cannot be reached right away.
- Be certain that the babysitter is aware that they should never leave children alone or unattended in the house – even for a minute.
- Establish rules for a babysitter, especially if a teenager, such as no visitors in the home while they are babysitting, use of cell phone and other electronic devices, etc.
- Determine rules regarding transporting children while in the care of a babysitter.

## **Background Checks**

Foster care providers and household members age 13 and over are required to have a Background Check completed prior to licensing, or if a household member turns 13 after you are licensed, you are required to contact the licensing worker to complete the process.

## **Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

Minnesota law requires single and multiple dwelling residences to have carbon monoxide detectors installed within ten feet of each bedroom. Although this is not yet written in foster care rules or statutes, foster care providers are strongly urged to comply with the carbon monoxide law.

## **Car Seats**

- Car seat training is required for anyone transporting a foster child under the age of nine and must be taken every five years.
- Minnesota law requires that children must remain in a federally approved, properly secured restraint until they reach 8 years old – unless the child is 4’9” or taller.
- Children ages birth to one year, up to 20-22 pounds, must ride in rear facing child safety seat approved for their weight. Try to keep children rear facing until they reach the rear facing weight limit.
- Children ages one to four, 20-40 pounds, must use forward facing safety booster seats approved for their weight.
- Children both under age 8 and shorter than 4’9” must use front facing booster seats.
- Talk with your licensing worker if you need car seat training.

In addition:

- Read the instruction manual for your specific car seat and keep the manual in the car. Also read the vehicle owner’s manual for information on car seats and seat belt systems.
- Choose a seat that can be held tightly against the car’s seat back. Try the car seat in your car before using it.
- Replace a car seat if it is more than six years old.
- Destroy any car seat that has been involved in an accident even if there is no outward damage.
- Car seats and booster seats need to meet current federal safety regulations, and are appropriate for the child’s age and weight. Visit their website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

## **Changes in your household**

Changes to be reported to the supervising agency:

- Family Composition
- Changes in employment of either spouse

- Telephone numbers, unlisted numbers or employment phone numbers
- Change of address (license will not forward in the mail)
- Physical structure of the home
- Emergencies
- Illness that requires special treatment or hospitalization
- Serious injury to the child

## Clothing

### Initial Clothing Allowance

- Not all children need an initial clothing allowance.
- If a child comes to your home without sufficient clothes, you may receive an initial clothing allowance. You will need to get approval from the social worker in advance.
- It is rare that a child would ever need the full clothing allowance.
- The initial clothing allowance must be available for the child, based on the child's individual needs during the first 60 days of the child's initial placement.  
[Minnesota Statutes 260C.4413]
- The social worker will work with you to determine the clothing allowance dollar amount.
- You are required to save all receipts and identify each item on the receipt. Receipts for clothing need to be submitted with the Foster Care Misc. Voucher for reimbursement.

Initial clothing allowances are only available the first time a child enters foster care. Federal funding and mandates prevent all subsequent placements from being eligible for clothing allowance reimbursements. Exception can be made, but only with supervisor approval. Ongoing clothing purchases are made with foster care payments.

### Minimum Clothing Standard

The following is a guideline for the minimum wardrobe you must maintain for each foster child while the child is living in your home. All items are expected to fit well and be in good repair.

<p>INFANTS (0-1 YEAR OLD)</p> <p>7-10 Outfits</p> <p>7 Onesies or T-shirts</p> <p>1 pair of shoes</p> <p>1 coat appropriate for the season</p> <p>Snow pants, cap, and mittens (winter)</p> <p>1 comb or hairbrush</p> <p>Any gifts given to the child while in foster care</p>	<p>CHILDREN AGES 1-11 YEARS</p> <p>7 underpants</p> <p>7 pair of socks</p> <p>2 sleepwear</p> <p>5 tops</p> <p>2 pants/shorts</p> <p>2 sweatshirts or sweaters</p> <p>1 outfit for special occasions</p> <p>2 pair of shoes</p> <p>1 coat appropriate for the season</p> <p>Snow pants, cap, mittens and boots (winter)</p>
---	---

	Swimsuit (summer) Any gifts given to the child while in foster care
CHILDREN AGES 12-14 YEARS 7 underpants 7 T-shirts 7 pair of socks 2 bras (girls) 2 sleepwear 5 tops 5 pants/shorts 1 sweatshirt 1 outfit for special occasions 2 pair of shoes 1 coat appropriate for season Snow pants, cap, mittens and boots (winter) Swimsuit (summer) Any gifts given to the child while in foster care	CHILDREN AGES 14-18 YEARS 7 underpants 7 pair of socks 2 bras (girls) 2 sleepwear 5 tops 2 pants/shorts 1 sweatshirt 1 outfit for special occasions 2 pair of shoes 1 coat appropriate for season Snow pants, cap, mittens, and boots (winter) Swimsuit (summer) Any gifts given to the child while in foster care

Clothing allowances are not meant to be used to purchase personal care items (toothbrushes, deodorant, body wash, etc.), school supplies, furniture, bedding, car seats, baby items (bottles, diapers, formula, etc.) or toys.

**Data Privacy**

Legislation has made special provisions for use of private data. During the course of licensing, a licensing worker has asked many questions. It is your right to be informed of the intent and purpose of collection of private data. A specific procedure also assures the accuracy of content as well as generally requiring your written consent to release private information. There is respect, concern, and consideration for your personal privacy. Please refer to the following chart to learn what is considered private and public data. Private data can only be released with your written consent. Public data can be provided to anyone who requests it.

As a foster care provider, any information available to you about the child and their families should be kept confidential and may not be released to others. Any request for photographs, interviews or publicity of any kind involving the child requires legal consent forms indicating agreement of the child’s legal custodian.

DATA PRIVACY GUIDELINES – FAMILY SYSTEMS PROGRAMS

*Note: the following information is intended as general guidelines and examples. This information is NOT intended to be legal advice. Please contact your agency attorney for specific advice regarding the MN Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13, the Maltreatment of Minors Act, and the Vulnerable Adult Act.*

<b>Public Data on Application, License Holder or Former License Holder (Individual/Non-individual)</b>
Name, address, telephone number
Date of receipt of completed application
Dates of licensure, previous license history
Licensed Capacity, Class of License
Type of Client Preferred
Type of Dwelling
Name and relationship of other family members
Withdrawn and Denied application information including: name, city and county, type of license, dates of commissioner’s receipt of initial application and completed application, date of withdrawal of application. Additionally, if denied, the date of denial, nature for denial and status of any appeal.
Variances granted
Number of reported serious injuries or deaths of individuals in the licensed program
Record of training and education in child development
Status of an appeal of a complaint, licensing violation, substantiated maltreatment, or negative action
Type of Negative Action taken
Negative Action Order
Whether a fine has been paid
Correction Orders (with any private info redacted)
Existence and status of complaints
Following any appeal: findings of fact, conclusions of law, and commissioner’s final order
Settlement Agreement
Substance and investigative findings of resolved complaints with private data redacted
Once licensing sanction or denial is issued, the identity of licensee as substantiated perpetrator of maltreatment is public if the licensing sanction or denial is based on the maltreatment
Once licensing sanction or denial is issued, the identity of the license holder as a disqualified individual is public if the licensing sanction or denial is based on the disqualification
The identity of the disqualified individual and reasons for the disqualification are public if the disqualification is set aside for a child care center or family child care program
The identity of a disqualified individual, the reasons for the disqualification, and the terms of the variance are public if a variance is granted for a child care center or a family child care program
The identity of the disqualified individual, the reasons for the disqualification, and the terms of the variance are public if a disqualification is set aside or a variance is granted for any 15-year disqualification, EXCEPT those for relative child foster care programs

<b>Private Data on LH/Non-Public Data on LH (Individual/Non-individual)</b>
Any medical, psychiatric, mental health, or chemical dependency information
CFC and AFC Home Studies
Personal financial data on the family child care program applicants, LHs, and family members who provide services under the license
Child care enrollment forms
Background study information
Disqualifications that are not set-aside
Disqualification notices
AFC and CFC re-licensing evaluations
Complaint investigative data on a closed investigations
Licensing information from other counties/agencies
References
Placement worker evaluations
Formal evaluations from previous counties/agencies
<b>Confidential Data on Individual LHs &amp; Protected Non-Public Data on Non-individual LHs</b>
Complaint investigation data (during an open investigation)
Reporter(s) name(s)

### **Dental Care**

A child who comes into foster care may not have had routine dental care. If dental care is needed, this should be completed within 30 days of placement. If a child is needed to be put on anesthesia, a social worker has to approve it. You may find it difficult to find places that take medical assistance. You can ask the social worker if you need additional assistance.

### **Discipline Policy**

Foster care providers must sign the Child Safety Agreement form stating they will abide by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Rule 2960.3080, Subp. 8 about Discipline.

The license holder must consider the child’s abuse history and developmental, cultural, disability, and gender needs when deciding the disciplinary action to be taken with the child. Disciplinary action must be in keeping with the license holder’s discipline policy. The discipline policy must include the requirements in items A and B.

- A. Children must not be subjected to: (1) 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; (2) 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; (3) punishment for lapses in toilet

habits, including bed wetting or soiling; (4) withholding of 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; (5) assigning work that is dangerous or not consistent with the child's case plan; (6) 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; (7) 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; and (8) requirements to assume uncomfortable or fixed positions for an extended length of time, or to march, stand, or kneel as punishment.

- B. The license holder: (1) must not require a child to punish other children; (2) must follow the child's case plan regarding discipline; (3) must not use mechanical restraints or seclusion, as defined in part 2960.3010, subpart 38, with a foster child; (4) must ensure that the duration of time-out is appropriate to the age of the child; (5) must meet the requirements of part 9525.2700, subpart 2, item , regarding the use of aversive or deprivation procedures with a foster child with a developmental disability.

[Minnesota Rule 2960.3080]

### **Driver's Education/Minors Driving**

Foster care providers cannot sign for the child's driver's license application. The Minnesota Bureau of Public Safety allows only a parent or legal custodian to sign for this.

If the child would like to obtain his or her driver's license, it will need to be discussed with the social worker. It is important to also consider contacting your vehicle insurance company to learn about additional costs of liabilities for your policy if the child was added.

### **Education**

After enrollment in school, which can be a shared responsibility between the social worker and the foster care provider, guiding the child to regular school attendance and monitoring the appropriateness of his/her program are part of the daily role in the child's care. A foster care provider may not homeschool a child without prior authorization from the child's legal custodian and the social worker. This is usually reserved for unique circumstances.

If a child is on an IEP. Ask to attend the IEP meetings or other school meetings.

You do not have the right to sign for school paperwork unless given the right by a court order or written consent is signed by the child's legal custodian. If there is paperwork that needs a

signature please contact the social worker so as to ensure the child's needs are appropriately met.

## **Firearms**

All firearms must be unloaded and inaccessible to the child. Ammunition and firearms must be stored in separate locked areas.

[Minnesota Rule 9502.0435]

Report to your licensor if you have a permit to carry. Weapons and ammunition must not be visible.

Any child who is using a gun must have:

- Written permission from the child's legal custodian AND
- Written permission from his/her social worker AND
- Successfully completed a state-certified gun safety program AND
- An adult present during any use of the gun

## **Foster Care Reimbursement**

Foster care providers will be reimbursed for the cost of care of the child placed in their home. Reimbursement will be determined by the social worker when they complete a MAPCY (Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth).

A uniform assessment process is a key part of Northstar Care for Children called the Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY). The MAPCY tool is comprehensive and supports good practice. Rather than identifying how "sick" the child is, we want to shift the focus to how the caregiver can meet their needs. A complete MAPCY will answer two primary questions about the youth in care

- What are the young person's needs?
- What parenting are you doing to meet those needs?

## **MAPCY Domains**

For all domains, the assessor doesn't pick the level, but instead the assessor selects from among the available choices (in consultation with the caregiver).

- Placement Experience
- Dynamics in the Caregiver's Home
- Supervision, Guidance & Structure
- Mental Health, Physical Health & Development

- Preserving Connections
- Developing Identity
- Education
- Child Care (ages birth -12 only)

This should result in a less subjective rating, with the computer deriving the level and the resulting score.

### **Grievance Procedure Against the Agency**

If you disagree with an Agency decision or are dissatisfied with services from an Agency representative:

- A. Discuss the problem with the licensing worker or social worker involved. If the issue is not resolved, call that worker's supervisor to discuss the issue.
- B. If not resolved, a written grievance requesting resolution of a disagreement between themselves and the Agency will be submitted to the director. The written complaint should contain a statement of the issues and how it should be resolved. Within 30 days of the director receiving it, the grievance will be responded to by writing, a phone call or a meeting.
- C. If you still feel as if the concern has not been addressed adequately, you may call the Office of the Ombudsperson.
- D. Understand that the final decision-making authority rests with the Agency or court. Certain actions are not to be grieved. These include contractual agreements and placement decisions.
- E. The foster care provider still needs to carry out the child's case plan even if there is no consensus.

### **Grievance Procedure for Foster Children**

The license holder must work with the licensing agency to develop written complaint and grievance procedures for foster children. The procedures must meet at least the following requirements:

- A. The agency or license holder must tell the child and the child's parent or legal representative about the complaint and grievance procedures and upon request give the child or the child's parent or legal representative a copy of the procedure and any forms needed to complain or grieve.
- B. The license holder must notify the placing and licensing agency about a written complaint or grievance and the resolution of the complaint or grievance; and
- C. A license holder's response to a complaint or grievance that alleges abuse or neglect must meet the requirements of the Maltreatment of Minors Act, Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556.

[Minnesota Rule 2960.3080]

### **Guardian ad Litem Visits**

The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a Court-appointed layperson or attorney who is assigned to independently look out for the child's best interest. The GAL may contact the foster care provider, the child, the child's legal custodian or any other person involved in the child's life to determine what is best for him/her. The GAL's primary purpose is to look after the child's best interests in Court. GAL's can see the child at any time. They do not need a release.

### **Hair and Hygiene**

The child may need assistance with washing, bathing and flossing teeth, hair and skin care, toileting habits and menstrual hygiene. You must provide the necessary supplies for the child and assistance as needed.

Foster care providers are responsible for keeping the child's hair clean and neat.

Foster care providers may not consent to the child's haircuts, permanents, relaxers or other chemical processes without permission from the child's legal custodian, obtained by the social worker. If you feel the child is in need of a haircut, it is important to discuss this with the social worker or child's legal custodian first. In order to give a child a haircut, you will need permission as hair styles, cuts and care can be culturally significant.

If you have a child who is a different race from you and you need special products for hair or skin care, contact the social worker. For example, African American hair is usually coarse in texture, tighter in curl pattern and more delicate and vulnerable to damage from environmental and chemical treatments. A child with a darker skin pigmentation are often more dry and the oils must be replaced daily.

### **Injury - Incident Reports**

A report should be made to the social worker and your licensing worker when a child is injured or there has been an incident of concern. You need to file an incident report that includes date, location and incident. There is a form that is available upon request. The sooner you let your licensing worker and social worker know the better, so if a report comes in about it, we have a statement from you which might prevent further issues.

### **Insurance Coverage**

The Minnesota Joint Underwriting Association (MJUA) was created by the 1986 Minnesota State Legislature. MJUA provides liability insurance coverage only to persons or entities unable to obtain insurance through ordinary methods if the insurance is required by statute, ordinance or otherwise required by law, or is necessary to earn a livelihood or conduct a business and serve a

public purpose (Minnesota Statute 621). The legislature specifically authorized the MJUA to provide insurance coverage to day care centers, group homes, sheltered workshops for mentally, emotionally, or physically handicapped persons and citizen participation groups. The eligibility of other classes of the business for MJUA coverage is to be determined on a class by class basis through a process described below.

The number to call about questions: 1-800-552-0013, email: [info@mjua.org](mailto:info@mjua.org)

## **Internet**

### **Internet and Foster Children**

Foster children can benefit from being online, but may also be targets of exploitation or crime. Adult supervision is necessary while utilizing the Internet.

### **Internet Risks**

Teenagers are most susceptible to risk because they are more likely to participate in online discussions (chat rooms) regarding companionship, relationships or sexual activity. They could be exposed to inappropriate private sexual, belligerent, harassing or violent material. While participating in online discussions, children may risk their safety by providing personal information, making themselves vulnerable to predators.

Computers should be in areas that allow easy and consistent supervision by adults. Most internet services provide adults with the ability to block and limit access to features, such as adult orientated sites. Your Internet provider may also provide a weekly update of web-sites visited by each individual who signed on using your computer. These tools do not take the place of parental supervision.

### **Internet Safety and Usage for your foster child**

- Make sure the child knows never to give out identifying information (name, address, school name, telephone number, etc.).
- If you don't know how to access the services the child uses, ask the child to show you.
- Use the system controls and blockers/filters to eliminate objectionable material.
- Never allow a child to arrange a face - to - face meeting with another computer user.
- Never allow a child to respond to threatening, obscene, or uncomfortable emails. Encourage the child to tell you if they encounter such messages.
- Remember that people online may not be who they seem. Someone claiming to be a 12 year old girl, could be an adult.
- Keep computers in areas that allow for easy supervision.

## **Mandated Reporting**

Minnesota Statutes 626.556 and 626.557 mandate foster care providers to report suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults; require the investigation of such reports; and mandate provisions of counseling and protective services in appropriate cases.

If a child reports or you suspect abuse or neglect, within 24 hours make a report directly to Aitkin County Health & Human Services, during working hours. After hours, Law Enforcement or Child Protection email.

Email: [Child.protection@co.aitkin.mn.us](mailto:Child.protection@co.aitkin.mn.us)

You must also inform the social worker. Do not assume that it has been reported.

## **Medical Care**

A child must have a medical checkup within 30 days of placement. Foster care providers do not have the authority to arrange for anything with the exception of routine medical care for the child. If a doctor or medical facility determines that appropriate and routine care includes necessary tests, immunizations and vaccinations for the child, you may consent to those routine procedures. If the doctor recommends more than routine care for the child, contact the social worker who will obtain the necessary permission. In an emergency situation where there is risk of life or health, and it cannot be delayed, then it can be provided, but is best to consult with the social worker first.

## **Medical Coverage**

If the child is not eligible for straight Medical Assistance (MA), a Prepaid Medical Assistance Program (PMAP) will be chosen by either the social worker or the foster care provider. If you are unsure which plan to choose, contact the social worker. When a child is placed, the agency will apply for MA for the child.

## **Mileage Reimbursement**

Foster care provider may submit a claim for mileage accrued while transporting a foster child in certain circumstances. These are broken into medical and non-medical mileage reimbursements.

**Medical mileage reimbursement** consists of transporting a foster child to:

- Medical, vision, and dental appointments,
- Therapy appointments,
- Psychiatric appointments, etc.

These transports must meet the criteria required by medical assistance to get reimbursement.

**Non-medical mileage reimbursement** is all other transportation of the foster child to other important activities. Aitkin County will pay for the following:

- Mileage to and from visits with parent or other relatives,
- To and from court
- When picking up/meeting with a social worker to exchange the child at the time of placement or
- When the child is returning home.

All other mileage reimbursement needs prior approval from the social worker and their supervisor.

### **Moving**

Any new household member needs to pass a background check before moving in. Failure to comply could lead to correction orders, child removal and/or a negative licensing action, including revocation of your license.

If you plan on moving, you need to report it to your licensing worker to make sure the home or dwelling meets foster care standards.

If you plan on moving out of the county, you will need to discuss it with your licensing worker and the social worker.

### **Parent/Child Visits**

The child is to have regular visitation with their legal custodian as outlined in the agency agreement. The social worker will establish a visitation plan for the child and their legal custodian that takes the foster care provider's lifestyle and plans into consideration.

Foster care provider cannot provide transportation for the child's legal custodian to or from visits without social worker approval.

### **Pets**

A foster home serving children less than six years of age must not keep reptiles, chickens or ducks as pets. A foster home serving children six years of age and older that keeps reptiles, chickens, or ducks as pets must require a thorough hand washing following the handling of the animal, its food, and anything the animal has touched. Pets in family residences must be immunized and maintained as required by local ordinances and state laws.

[Minnesota Rule 2960.3050]

## **Phone**

A foster home must have an operable phone located in the residence for safety reasons. However, if the foster care provider uses only cellular service, the agency requires the foster care provider to read, sign and comply with the conditions of the Landline Exception Agreement.

The Landline Exception Agreement requires foster care providers to have a charged, functioning cell phone in the home at all times.

## **Piercings and Tattoos**

A foster care provider may not give permission for piercings, including ear piercings, or tattoos without written permission from the child's legal custodian or by the social worker.

## **Prescription Payments**

Prescriptions should be covered by the child's medical insurance. However, there will be times when a child's medical coverage has not been activated yet. Call the social worker to get instructions on how to obtain the child's medications in these situations.

## **Relicensing**

Your license lists an expiration date. Prior to that date, your licensing worker will meet with you to complete your relicensing study so that the licensing worker can make a recommendation to the Minnesota Department of Human Services for a license renewal.

## **Respite Care**

Respite: Short-term care services provided due to the absence or need for relief of the family member(s) or primary caregiver normally providing the care.

A foster care provider can request respite at any time. It is not guaranteed that respite will be provided, but with advance notice we will have a greater chance of finding a provider.

A foster care provider must notify their licensing worker and the social worker if they have contacted another provider to provide respite. If you get contacted by another foster care provider, you must notify your licensing worker.

You may be asked to pay the other foster care provider the daily rate upfront unless payment on a later date is agreed upon.

Respite and Substitute Care for Family Settings  
 Minnesota Rules, part 2960.3090  
 Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.144; 245A.175; & 245A.18

DEFINITIONS & REQUIREMENTS

SUBSTITUTE CARE	<p>Temporary care of foster children <b><u>inside the foster home</u></b> by someone other than the foster parent <b><u>for overnight or longer</u></b></p>
<p>LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER</p> <p>*Minnesota Statutes, section 245C.04, subd. 1 (g) (1) requires that a new background study must be submitted through NETStudy when an individual returns to a position requiring a BGS following an absence of 120 or more consecutive days.</p>	<p>Long-term substitute care means <b><u>more than 72 hours</u></b> of continuous care for a foster child.</p> <p>Qualifications: a substitute caregiver must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be at least 18 years of age</li> <li>✓ Have a completed and passed a background study</li> </ul> <p>If providing <b><u>more than 30 cumulative days</u></b> of substitute care in a 12-month period:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Submit a signed statement of good health and be physically able to care for foster children; and</li> <li>(2) Have at least 6 hours of training or 20 hours of experience caring for children with needs specific to the child being cared for; and</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide documentation of medical equipment training on the equipment used to care for the foster child</li> </ul> <p><u>Children’s Mental Health Training</u> – required prior to caring for foster children</p> <p><u>Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Training</u> – annual training must include one hour of training on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders</p> <p><u>Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) &amp; Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) Training</u> – required prior to caring for foster children under age five</p> <p><u>Child Passenger Restraint Training</u> – required prior to <u>transporting</u> foster children under age nine</p>
<p>SHORT-TERM SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER</p> <p>(Not required to have a background study unless it is anticipated that they will become a long-term substitute caregiver).</p>	<p>Short-term substitute care means <b><u>less than 72 hours</u></b> of continuous care for a foster child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Does not have to meet the requirements of a long-term substitute caregiver</li> <li>✓ The foster parent and the placing agency must agree the short-term substitute caregiver is able to meet the needs of the foster child</li> <li>✓ Must provide documentation of medical equipment training on the equipment used to care for the foster child from an appropriate training source</li> </ul> <p><u>SUID &amp; AHT Training</u> – required prior to caring for foster children under age five</p> <p><u>Child Passenger Restraint Training</u> – required prior to <u>transporting</u> foster children under age nine</p>
RESPITE CARE	<p>Temporary care of foster children in a licensed foster home <b><u>other than the foster home the child was placed in</u></b></p>
NOTICE REQUIREMENTS	<p><u>Non-emergency situations:</u> License holder, parent, and placing agency must agree on respite care and substitute care arrangements within 10 working days prior to the use of such care or agree on respite care according to an ongoing written agreement. License holder must notify the placing agency when respite care or long-term substitute care is being provided.</p> <p><u>Emergency situations:</u> Licensing holder must notify the placing agency of the emergency ASAP</p>

## *Runaways/Missing Child*

A runaway child requires a call to law enforcement and the social worker. A lost or missing child requires an immediate call to 911 for law enforcement assistance. Leave a message for social worker if they are not available and file an incident report.

## *Safe Sleeping Environment*

Infants up to age One must:

- Sleep in a safe crib (a portable crib or car seat may not be used).
- Be placed on their backs to sleep on a firm mattress with a tight-fitted sheet (adult sheets may come loose and entangle an infant).
- Sleep in an area free of pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals, quilts or comforters, as they may cause suffocation.

Infants must not:

- Sleep in an adult or toddler bed either alone or with another person.
- Share a crib with another child.
- Be placed in a bean bag chair.
- Be placed in a mesh sided playpen unless the sides are left in the upright position.

By the age of Five:

- Children of the opposite sex typically may not share a bedroom. This includes siblings. Exceptions to this policy are required to be authorized by your licensing worker.

All foster children must:

- Sleep in a bedroom. An adult (18 years and older) who is not related to the foster child may not share the foster child's bedroom.
- Have his/her own bed that is large enough to match the size and age of the foster child. In some circumstances, siblings of the same sex may share a double bed. However, you must obtain prior permission from you Licensing Worker and the social worker.

Please note:

- Under special circumstances, the licensing worker may approve alternative arrangements.

- Non-relative providers must have at least two bedrooms in your home to provide foster care.
- If using a crib, you must check yearly for crib recalls against the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

### **School Lunches**

The child is usually eligible for free school hot lunches regardless of the foster care provider's income. This is a state program available in each school district in the county. Foster care providers should contact the school where the child will attend and request the necessary forms. Contact the social worker if problems arise.

### **Sexual Boundaries**

- Foster families must have clear sexual boundaries. Clearly state what kinds of touch are okay and not okay. Make sure you also review this information with babysitters.
- Under no circumstances should foster care providers touch a foster child in a sexual way or ask a foster child to touch them in a sexual way.
- You must avoid innocent touching that a sexually abused child may interpret as being sexual (such as having a foster child give you a massage).
- Clearly explain your family privacy rules including bathing, toileting and dressing.
- Use good judgement regarding the nature of video, audio, computer and written materials to which foster children are exposed.

### **Smoke-Free Requirements**

Due to the risks of second-hand smoke, foster homes for children are required to provide a smoke-free environment in the following areas. This includes electronic cigarettes.

You cannot smoke:

- Inside the home
- Other enclosed spaces connected to the home, such as a garage, porch or deck
- Motor vehicles
- Outdoors, when the children are present

The new requirements include assessing the capacity of prospective foster care provider to provide a smoke-free environment. The Minnesota Adoption and Child Foster Care Application (DHS 4258A) was amended. As part of the home study assessment, a child's placing agency reviews prospective foster care providers' plan to provide a smoke-free environment for foster children. This includes identifying household members who smoke, and for the applicant to define a plan to provide a smoke-free environment for foster children in their home, garage, surrounding area and cars.

If a foster parent fails to provide a smoke-free environment for a foster child the child-placing agency must ask the foster parent to comply with a plan that includes training on the health risks of exposure to second-hand smoke. If the agency determines that the foster parent is unable to provide a smoke-free environment and that the home environment constitutes a health risk to a foster child, the agency must reassess whether the placement is based on a child's best interest.

[Minnesota Statutes 260C.215]

### **Social Media Guideline**

Purpose: To ensure the confidentiality and safety of the child placed in your home.

All foster care providers, including relative foster parents, are not the legal guardian of the child and, therefore, do not have permission to give out confidential information about the child or family. This is in accordance to the "Agreement Between Foster Parents and Placement Agency" (DHS-0139) and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Foster care providers must not allow photographs, sketches, videos, identifying information or name of the child to be used in any material that will be available to the public. This includes but is not limited to:

- Photos or sketches, and/or videos shown to anyone other than immediate family members.
- Photos, sketches, names or identifying information on a web page or website. Including but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, social media, YouTube, Twitter, etc.)
- Photos, sketches, names or identifying information as part of a presentation for a class, article, recognition, etc.
- Photos; sketches, names or identifying information in any publication, such as newspapers, company newsletters, magazines, etc.

In some instances, a consent form can be given for the release of confidential information from each child's legal custodian for usage.

#### **Social Media Ties:**

Social media helps youth in foster care fit in with their peers and foster normalcy. Using social media, youth can keep in touch with friends, siblings and others and make new connections. Ask the social worker who the child has permission to talk to.

## *Social Worker Visits*

The social worker is to visit the child a minimum of once a month. It may be necessary to have more frequent contact. The plan for the social worker contact will be determined based upon the needs of the child and foster care providers.

During these contacts, it is necessary for the social worker to spend some time alone with the child. These visits are usually scheduled in advance; however, it should be understood that the social worker has the right to visit at any time and to visit in private whenever desired.

When private visits or visits out of the foster care provider's home have been held with the child, it is the responsibility of the social worker to inform the foster care provider about pertinent information. At the same time, it is the foster care provider's responsibility to keep the social worker informed of the child's adjustment and behavior. Social workers can see the child at any time as they have temporary physical custody of the child.

## *Television and Video Games*

If there are TV or video games present, they need to be age and developmentally appropriate for the child. Foster care providers are also responsible for exposure to those things in the household. A correction or removal order could be issued if not allowed.

## *Training*

Each foster parent must complete a minimum of 12 hours of training per year in one or more of the areas in this subpart or in other areas as agreed upon by the licensing agency and the foster parent. If the foster parent has not completed the required annual training at the time of re-license and does not show good cause why the training was not completed, the foster parent may not accept new foster children until the training is completed.

- Mental Health Training
  - At least one hour of the annual 12-hour training requirement for foster parents must be in children's mental health issues and treatment.  
[Minnesota Statute 245A.175]
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum (FASD) Training
  - One hour of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome education must be documented each year.  
[Minnesota Statutes 245A.175]
- Vulnerable Adult Mandated Reporting
  - If you are providing care for youth ages 18-21, you must complete training each year on vulnerable adult mandated reporting.  
[Minnesota Statutes 245A.65]
- Medical Equipment Training

- Foster parents who care for children who rely on medical equipment to sustain life or monitor a medical condition must meet the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.155.  
[Minnesota Rule 2960.3070]
- Car Seat Training
  - This training is required every five years for foster care providers taking children under the age of nine. The training must be done by a certified Department of Public Safety trainer. Babysitters and others who help transport the child under the age of nine on a consistent basis are required to complete this training.  
[Minnesota Statutes 245A.18]
- SUID/AHT Training
  - Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUIDS) Training and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) Training is required for families taking infants and children through age 5. Babysitters and others who help care for the child through age 5 are required to complete this training. This training must be repeated every 5 years.  
[Minnesota Statutes 245A.144]
- Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard
  - The Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard was developed to remove barriers to normalcy for foster children supporting emotional and developmental growth by permitting children to participate in activities or events that are generally accepted as suitable for children/youth of the same chronological ages or developmentally appropriate for a child. The standard is characterized by careful and sensible parenting decisions that maintain a child's health and safety; cultural, religious, and tribal values; and best interests, while at the same time encouraging a child's emotional and developmental growth.
  - When applying the standard to a parenting decision, foster care providers must consider the following factors: child/youth's age, maturity and developmental level, risk of the activity, best interest of child/youth, importance of experience, behavioral history of child/youth and the wishes of the child's legal custodian, as appropriate.  
[Minnesota Statute 260.212, subd. 14]
  - This is an hour long training and is required prior to licensing.

### *Other Training Resources*

The intent of ongoing trainings is to build on the foster care providers initial interest in providing services and to maximize their ability to provide the highest quality services to children. Training is available through many different resources.

What can you do for ongoing training? There is so much to choose from!

1. DVD's and books

- a. If training is obtained by viewing DVDs or reading books, provide a copy of the training certificate to your licensor
2. Online Courses
  - a. If training is obtained on-line, provide a copy of the training certificate to your licensor
3. Therapy Sessions
  - a. Therapy sessions can be counted for training if the foster parent participates in the entire session with the child.
  - b. If the foster care provider is assigned homework (i.e. reading, implementing a specific plan), additional hours may be approved by your licensor.
4. Minnesota Foster Parents Association:
  - a. The State Association offers conferences and workshops in addition to an informative newsletter. Learn more about the association from their website: [www.minnesotafostercare.org](http://www.minnesotafostercare.org)
5. Community Education:
  - a. The school districts and other organizations announce educational opportunities.
6. Subject matter similar to topics outlined in this handbook can be discussed with the licensing worker for appropriateness.

### **Recording your Training Hours**

- A foster care provider must keep track of their training. The Provider Training Form will be turned in to the licensing worker at the time of relicensing.
- You are responsible for noting your training hours on the Provider Training Form
- After you complete the additional trainings, fill out the Independent Study Questionnaire and return it to your licensing Worker.

### **Travel**

If the child is taken out of town or is to spend a night away from the foster home, the social worker should be contacted and informed so any questions that may arise can be answered.

Before the child is taken out of state, written permission must be obtained **prior to the trip** from the Agency. A reachable location, a telephone number and an itinerary must be given prior to departure.

Out-of-state trips require the Agency and the child's legal custodian statement giving permission for a medical doctor to provide care should sickness or an accident occur on the trip. Court authorization may also be involved; minimum of two weeks' notice is requested.

## *Vision Care*

A child who comes into foster care may not have had routine vision care. If vision care is needed, this should be completed within 30 days of placement. You may find it difficult to find places that take medical assistance. You can ask the social worker if you need additional assistance.

## *Well testing*

Water from privately-owned wells must be tested annually by a certified laboratory. Testing is for nitrates, Chloroform and E. coli.

## *WIC*

Foster care children and infants up to age 5 are almost always eligible for the WIC Program (Women, Infants and Children). They may be eligible to receive vouchers for infant formula, cereal, juice, milk, cheese, eggs, yogurt, peanut butter and beans. WIC also provides nutrition education. WIC eligibility is based upon the child and will not look at the foster care provider's income. For more information, call the WIC office at 218-927-7201.

This page intentionally left blank.



# Aitkin County Health & Human Services

204 FIRST STREET NW  
AITKIN, MINNESOTA 56431-1291  
PHONE 1-800-328-3744 or 1-218-927-7200  
FAX # 1-218-927-7210

## *Acknowledgement of Receipt of Foster Care Provider Handbook*

The Aitkin County Foster Care Provider Handbook contains important information. I understand that I should consult the Licensing Worker regarding any questions not answered in the Handbook.

I understand that the policies and information contained in the Handbook may be changed or amended at any time by Aitkin County with or without notice. If changes are made to this Handbook, I understand that Aitkin County will provide me with the changes in writing and I will be given an opportunity to ask questions.

I have received a copy of the Aitkin County Foster Care Provider Handbook. I understand that I am expected to read the entire Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Foster Care Provider

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Foster Care Provider - Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Foster Care Provider

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Foster Care Provider - Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This Receipt is to be placed in the foster care provider's file.