



**CHRISTIAN
HERITAGE**

Foster Care

Foster and Adoptive Care Program Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1981 by Gregg and Lisa Nicklas, Christian Heritage exists to serve the needs of Nebraska's abused, neglected and abandoned children. What began as a single group home for eight teenage boys located in rural Hickman, Nebraska is now a strong faith-based foster care organization serving well over 130 foster children daily.

The foster care program, which started in 1987, incorporates basic principles of parenting, along with pre-service training designed to equip and prepare families for the responsibility of caring for children/youth who have been removed from their homes. While foster parenting is not for everyone, those who have the compassion and willingness to endure the heartache that comes with caring for children/youth who have been subjected to so much pain and suffering find that it is a very rewarding experience. Each and every foster parent has the daily opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of the children/youth they accept into their home. By no means does Christian Heritage discriminate services to children/youth based on religion, but the organization does desire those in care to have some interaction with church and the Christian community, and to develop a spiritual relationship for themselves, if they so desire.

Christian Heritage became a licensed adoption care agency in 2014. The scope of adoption services Christian Heritage provides is limited to two primary functions. Christian Heritage has the ability to support foster parents adopting a child/youth in foster care and the ability to complete adoption home studies.

The information contained herein is subject to change as long as it does not affect Health and Human Services licensing or COA (Council on Accreditation) standards for best practices. These procedures are intended to communicate best practice, but due to the nature of the work done, procedures may need to be tailored on occasion.

BASIC FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE CARE INFORMATION

According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), foster care is a safety service for children/youth in the event that they are unable to remain safely at home. Children/youth are provided with a substitute or supplemental family life experience in an NDHHS licensed home for a planned, temporary period of time. The parents of these children/youth receive support in working toward reunifying with their family or an alternate permanent plan for their child/youth.

The primary goal for children/youth in foster care is to return them to their families.

Foster/adoptive parents have the responsibility of helping children/youth and their parents achieve this goal. Permanency with birth parent(s) is the primary goal if parental rights have not been terminated, and concurrent planning is essential to ensure timely permanency for all children/youth.

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE FOSTER CARE PHILOSOPHY

Christian Heritage's philosophy for providing foster/adoptive care is guided by our core values and our vision and mission statements. Christian Heritage's established core values, vision and mission not only govern our approach to working with children/youth and their families, but drive our approach in attaining the best outcomes for children/youth and those families that have been entrusted to our care.

Core Values: Faith-Based, Strengths-Focused, and Family-Centered.

Vision: Families Restored, Children Filled with Hope and Prepared for Life.

Mission: To improve the lives of children by equipping families, promoting responsible fatherhood, and strengthening marriages—because we believe every child deserves a family.

OVERARCHING PHILOSOPHY

- Every child deserves to be adequately cared for by his/her parent(s).
- Every parent is entitled to assistance in learning how they can better care/provide for their children/youth.
- Those children/families needing additional supports and resources, or formal assessments to determine needs should have access to those services within their home community, or the least restrictive, most appropriate environment.
- If it is absolutely essential for children/youth to be placed out-of-home, children/youth should be placed in the most appropriate, family-like environment in the closest proximity to their family; every effort should be made to facilitate reunification and achieve permanency in a timely manner.
- If immediate reunification is not a viable alternative, the most appropriate and most family-like environment is essential within the community of the family, if at all possible.
- Children/youth placed out-of-home for an extended period of time deserve intensive reunification intervention to facilitate their return home. If this is unsuccessful, a permanent home should be sought for every child.
- Those children/youth in group or institutional care must be moved toward home. If circumstances prevent them from returning to their parent(s), then alternative permanent families shall be sought and made available.
- Those adolescents in out-of-home placements who are nearing the age of majority and without family support are entitled to skills training to prepare them for adult living.

TYPES OF PLACEMENTS:

The State of Nebraska utilizes the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibilities (NCR) Tool to determine the daily rate of a child in foster care. The NCR is based upon the age of the child, as well as the responsibilities that the foster parent has to fulfill in order to ensure the child receives adequate care. The NCR should NOT be completed based on the child's needs, but rather on the foster parent's responsibilities in response to those needs. The NCR tool is completed by the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) or Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) within 30 days of placement, and every 6 months thereafter. During the first 30 days of placement, a Pre-Assessment Rate is established, which is the same as the Essential rate. Once the NCR is scored by DHHS or NFC, a level of care will be assigned. The levels of care are listed below. Foster care rates are determined by DHHS and are subject to change.

Essential: The foster parent's responsibilities to the child are equivalent to that of a child who has needs that are age appropriate the majority of the time and require no more daily supervision than other children/youth of the same age. The Foster Care Specialist will make one face-to-face visit monthly.

Rates:

Ages 0-5: \$20/day

Ages 6-11: \$23/day

Ages 12-18: \$25/day

Enhanced: The foster parent's responsibilities to the child are equivalent to that of a child/youth whose needs, behaviors, medical conditions, and/or educational barriers fall between the minor and moderate levels and that require more support from caregivers than is age-appropriate. The Foster Care Specialist will make one to two face-to-face visits monthly.

Rates:

Ages 0-5: \$27.50/day

Ages 6-11: \$30.50/day

Ages 12-18: \$32.50/day

Intensive: The foster parent's responsibilities to the child are equivalent to that of a child/youth that exhibit moderate to severe behavioral and/or emotional problems at least daily or severe behavioral and/or emotional problems at least weekly; child/youth requires a behavior modification plan which entails significant or intensive daily administration by the foster parent(s) and the foster parent(s) has to undergo instruction and training to administer the plan; child/youth has a chronic health condition or physical disability which requires special training and constant monitoring by the foster parent(s) and/or requires special equipment. The Foster Care Specialist will make two to three face-to-face visits monthly. If necessary, more than three face-to-face visits are required depending on the individual needs of each child/youth.

Rates:

Ages 0-5: \$35/day

Ages 6-11: \$38/day

Ages 12-18: \$40/day

Fos-Adopt: When there is a possibility the child/youth may be available for adoption, the foster/adoptive family accepts the child/youth on a temporary foster care basis, but will adopt if the child/youth becomes legally available for adoption. Christian Heritage is a licensed adoption agency and will complete the adoption home study and provide support to foster/adoptive families until the adoption is finalized. All ages of children/youth are eligible for fos-adopt, but it is most common with children age 14 and under. The level of support foster/adoptive families receive from Christian Heritage is also contingent on the level the child/youth falls under. Once the child/youth is adopted, Christian Heritage no longer supports the child/youth or the foster/adoptive family unless they continue to provide foster care and place another child/youth in their home. Otherwise, the adopted child/youth becomes the sole responsibility of the foster/adoptive family.

Relative and Kinship: Christian Heritage provides support to Relative and Kinship foster families under its contract with the Department of Health and Human Services and NFC. Relative and Kinship foster homes will be supported and reimbursed at the same support level and rates that all foster parent(s) receive based on the level of care the child/youth falls under.

The ongoing level of support each child/youth and foster family need is individualized. Frequency of face-to-face contact with children/youth and his/her foster parent(s) noted above are considered minimum expectations. Christian Heritage has the responsibility to provide the level of support needed to ensure ongoing safety and placement stability.

REIMBURSEMENTS

Monthly payment is to assist with costs of room and board, care and supervision, clothing, allowance, transportation, regular (additional) respite care, and other usual costs of maintaining a child/youth.

Procedure:

- It is Christian Heritage's goal that foster/adoptive parent(s) are reimbursed on the 15th of each month for the previous month that the child/youth was in care. However, it is the foster parent's responsibility to return their monthly invoice in a timely manner in order for this goal to be achieved. Occasionally, holidays or weekends can interfere with this timeline.

ADOPTION PRACTICES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Christian Heritage sought to become a licensed adoption agency for the sole purpose of supporting licensed foster parents within our agency. There are situations where licensed foster parents decide to legally adopt a child/youth whose parents' legal rights have been terminated or relinquished. This is known as a fos-adoption and Christian Heritage supports our licensed foster families through this process. As a licensed adoption agency, Christian Heritage is also responsible for completing the adoption home studies.

Christian Heritage does not actively recruit adoptive parents. We believe children/youth should return home to be with their own biological family whenever possible. When prospective families call to learn about foster care and/or adoption, we interview them in their own homes. Those families that ONLY want to adopt a child are referred to a local adoption agency. Prospective families that are interested in providing foster care and are open to being a forever family have an opportunity to be supported by Christian Heritage.

Procedure:

- Christian Heritage will interview all prospective families to learn about their family and why they are interested in fostering. If we learn that a prospective family only wants to adopt, they will be referred to a local adoption agency.
- Prospective families that desire to do foster care and are open to becoming a forever family by adopting a legally eligible child will be supported by Christian Heritage as long as they meet all requirements to do so (refer to Recruitment and Retention and Home Studies and Licensing).
- Christian Heritage will prepare adoption home studies for children who are wards of the court and whose parental rights have been terminated; children who have resided in a licensed foster home for at least six (6) months; and for licensed foster families that are currently being supported by Christian Heritage and decide to become a forever family.
- Licensing Specialists are required to obtain three positive letters of reference for every adoptive family plus a positive reference from their employer. If the adoptive parents both work outside of the home, each of them is required to obtain a positive reference from their individual employer, and
- Christian Heritage will not complete adoption home studies for families seeking to adopt children and are not currently a licensed foster home within our agency.
- Christian Heritage will not participate in relinquishments or termination of parental rights.

- Christian Heritage will not complete Interstate Compacts on the Placement of Children (ICPC's) or be in charge of monitoring ICPC's completed with other agencies.
- Christian Heritage will not participate in conversations about adoption subsidies. All questions related to adoption subsidies will be directed to the child's Child and Family Services Specialist or Family Permanency Specialist.
- In situations where a licensed foster family legally adopts a child in foster care, the adoptive parents take on full legal custody and responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to: full financial responsibility, full decision-making responsibility regarding physical custody and education.
- Christian Heritage will no longer provide ongoing support to foster parents that adopt and no longer plan to foster. If a foster parent legally adopts a child and has other children in their home through foster care, Christian Heritage will continue to support the foster/adoptive family until the child establishes permanency and/or the case is closed.
- Foster/adoptive parents will keep a LIFE BOOK for all children in care. These books help children in care understand who they are in relation to their biological family and the circumstances they are confronted with. Maintaining family connections through LIFE BOOKS are one way of helping children make sense of their situation in life. LIFE BOOKS include, but are not limited to: pictures, significant events, placement information, birth information, etc. These books are completed by foster/adoptive parents and the child/youth in order to help them better deal with separation and loss. Foster/adoptive parents are required and responsible for ensuring every child/youth placed in their care has a LIFE BOOK and is provided the necessary assistance to keep it current.
- These procedures are subject to change based on future licensing modifications to our current adoption license, policy changes within the Department and/or any decisions by Christian Heritage to expand our current adoption services. No changes to current adoption services can be made or implemented without the Departments approval and knowledge.

Preparing for Adoption

Adopting a child/youth out of foster care for the purpose of having a forever family is paramount for their overall safety, permanency and well-being. Every child/youth deserves a forever family and permanency efforts within a child/youth's own family network should be exhausted before a decision is made to allow foster/adoptive parents to provide permanency. When it is determined that a child/youth has no one in their family network willing or able to provide permanency, fos-adoption becomes very important to these children. Christian Heritage experiences licensed foster/adoptive parents becoming forever families for the children that fall into this category on a fairly regular basis each year.

Procedure:

- Children/youth in the process of being adopted should be brought into the discussions and talked to in an open and honest manner as appropriate and depending on his/her age. They have a right to know about their plans and provide a voice that needs to be heard by all parties. Conversations like these need to occur often and depending on the situation, the child/youth's therapist may be involved in facilitating these discussions. Having open and honest conversations about the possibility of adoption will help the child/youth fully understand what the plan is for their lives.
- The Child Welfare Information Gateway on adoption offers the following suggestions: Prepare and plan for the discussions, decide the best way to discuss the option of adoption with the child, be prepared to answer all questions honestly and be transparent.
- Help children/youth talk about what they are hearing and how they perceive what adoption means for them. Ask an array of open-ended questions like, "how do you think being adopted will be different from being in foster care?"
- LIFE BOOKS are very important and should be used during these initial and ongoing conversations. Transferring attachments can be difficult for children/youth but it is an important process to help them walk through. There are several ways to help children/youth transfer their attachments. Examples include, but are not limited to: encouraging child/youth to start calling you "mom" and "dad", allow the child/youth to have a middle name and this will become a name of family significance, hang various pictures on the wall of the child/youth to show they are part of the family, involve child/youth in family functions and reunions, make statements such as, "in our family we do it this way" in a supportive way, allow biological family to remain involved in the child/youth's life as appropriate depending on the situation, allowing biological siblings and family members to remain involved may assist in normalizing their new reality of eventually being adopted, include the child/youth's therapist in these conversations to help prepare the child/youth for adoption, etc.
- Children/youth being adopted have a right to be involved in every step of the adoption process. They have a right to be heard and listened to. They also have the right to be notified of the process in an age appropriate manner. All communication needs to remain open and honest. There are certain situations where judgment needs to be used in communication because over-disclosure could be harmful (e.g. not making negative statements about his/her biological parents).
- Foster/adoptive parents are trained in the TIPS-MAPP curriculum. This training is family-centered in its approach and it does an excellent job of helping foster/adoptive parents understand the very important role of the biological family. TIPS-MAPP covers the difference between open and closed adoptions.

These discussions are important because foster/adoptive families need to be open and comfortable with allowing the biological families involvement. The level of biological family involvement is contingent of several factors that will be taken into consideration on an individualized basis. The level of involvement can include but not be limited to: regular phone contact, regular letter writing, sending cards on important dates, sibling gatherings, face-to-face contact on special days/events or evening on a regular basis depending on the unique situation. Christian Heritage and the TIPS-MAPP curriculum believe it is in the child/youths and biological family's best interest to agree on the level of contact and remain open to keeping the best interest of the child/youth at the forefront of all decisions.

SCREENING PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

Christian Heritage will screen foster care referrals thoroughly in order to find the best matches possible. The purpose is to ensure that children/youth are placed with Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parent(s) that can meet their individual needs for safety, permanency, stability, and well-being. Matching foster children/youth to a foster/adoptive home that can best meet the individual(s) needs is critical. When possible and age appropriate, foster children/youth should have input on whose foster home they will be placed. Christian Heritage will follow the guidelines of The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) regarding the screening of identified Indian children/youth. In addition, Christian Heritage will comply with the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) when making and arranging placements.

Christian Heritage will provide prompt, responsive screening of referrals so that informed decisions can be made regarding the safety and appropriateness of potential placement within a licensed foster parent(s) home. Acceptance or denial will occur within a timely manner resulting in the initiation of services or notification given to the referral source for the denial of services.

Procedure:

- The Christian Heritage Foster Care Supervisor will promptly review all referrals for foster care services and share information about potential placements with the Foster Care Team for their input. The Foster Care Supervisor will take into account all pertinent information regarding the child/youth, with special consideration being given to the Case Plan, previous placements, current and previous behaviors, and ability to function within a foster family environment. This information will be used to identify any and all potential foster homes. The foster home will then be contacted and presented the referral information, and an informed decision will be made for placement or deferred.
- The Christian Heritage Foster Care Team will review the referral to check for the potential of the child/youth having Native American heritage, thus falling under the guidelines of ICWA which will be established within the case plan. Native American foster homes will be given first consideration for placement of all Native American children/youth. Compliance with ICWA as defined in the

case plan will be maintained during the entirety of the child/youth's placement. Collaboration with the children and family services specialist (CFSS) will need to occur since they are the legal guardians and responsible for the case plan and decision making.

- The referral sources (Department of Health and Human Services and NFC) will be notified within five (5) business days of acceptance or denial for placement for all standard referrals. Special consideration will be given for emergency referrals with immediate response occurring within one (1) hour. Foster care services will begin immediately upon the child/youth's placement within a licensed Christian Heritage foster home.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Assessment begins at the time of initial referral and is ongoing throughout a child/youth's placement. Achieving permanency for every child/youth is paramount. Christian Heritage is intentional about ensuring that ongoing, thorough assessment and planning is occurring. Discharge planning begins at admission and continues until permanency is achieved. Ongoing assessment will ensure that appropriate services are in place for every child/youth entrusted to our care.

Christian Heritage is committed to providing services that are faith-based, strengths-focused, and family-centered. In meeting this commitment, Christian Heritage will, in a manner that is family-centered and culturally responsive, provide foster/adoptive services that meet the case plan objectives, whether that is reunification, guardianship, adoption or helping the individual achieve independence. This is one reason why ongoing assessment is so critical for every child/youth under the provision of our care.

Christian Heritage is sensitive to the written and oral communication needs of each child/youth when deficiencies, language barriers, or other extenuating circumstances exist. When written and oral communication needs are identified, steps will be taken to meet the individual needs of each child and youth.

Procedures:

- The Christian Heritage Foster Care Supervisor and Foster Care Specialist will thoroughly review referral information, the Case Plan, and any assessments that were conducted and compiled by the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) or Family Permanency Specialist (FPS). This information can be made available by collaborating with the CFSS or FPS assigned to each child/youth. Case Plans, and safety assessments will provide information as it pertains to family and youth functioning and historical factors that may contribute to presenting problems and concerns. These assessments will also include such information as, but not be limited to: risk and protective factors, safety plan information, child and family strengths, child/youth needs, the impact of maltreatment on the child/youth, and family resources supports that are in place or need to be put in place for the child/youth and the parent(s).

- Christian Heritage will ensure that the medical and mental health needs of all children/youth placed in Christian Heritage foster homes are assessed prior to and upon placement. Ongoing assessment of medical and mental health needs will occur regularly and be documented in KaleidaCare (health logs, service plans, etc.).
- Christian Heritage foster care staff will meet with the CFSS or FPS upon placement of the child/youth in a Christian Heritage foster home. During the placement meeting, additional thorough assessment of the child/youth needs will occur in conjunction with the CFSS or FPS and information contained in the Case Plan in order to determine the goals for the child/youth while in care. This assessment will take into consideration the child/youth's history as well as the future needs of the child/youth in order to establish permanency. The goals for the child/youth will need to account for factors that may affect the status of the placement. This includes, but is not limited to: safety issues, family issues, protective and other risk factors.
- Christian Heritage foster care staff will meet with the foster child/youth and foster/adoptive parents upon placement. Interim Service Plans will be implemented immediately upon placement. Initial assessment of baseline strengths and needs will be documented. This plan will be submitted to the CFSS or FPS upon request or depending on DHHS' /NFC's requirements.
- At placement, Christian Heritage staff in collaboration with the CFSS or FPS will schedule a Family Team Meeting including all family members and professionals involved in the placed child/youth's life. The initial Family Team Meeting will serve to provide further assessment of the child/youth needs in order to achieve ongoing safety, stability, well-being and permanency. The Family Team Meeting will also help solidify individual goals alluded to in the Case Plan along with additional assessment data. Information gathered will be documented in the development of the Comprehensive Service Plan which will be submitted to appropriate personnel within 30 days of placement, and will be reviewed at all following Family Team Meetings which are to occur every 30 days.
- Christian Heritage foster care staff will complete monthly Progress Reports based on the Comprehensive Service Plan. Ongoing assessment of progress towards the identified goals will be documented in the monthly Progress Reports. Progress Report are submitted by the 10th business day of every month for NFC. Progress Reports are submitted by the 15th working day for children/youth placed under the Department of Health and Human Services.
- The medical and mental health needs of all children/youth placed within Christian Heritage foster homes will be met in a professional and timely manner. Christian Heritage will ensure that an initial screening has been performed by a qualified medical practitioner within **72 hours** of entry into care. All other doctor, dental and optical appoints are required to be scheduled in the two weeks of placement. All medical and mental health services will be

utilized as required by the Case Plan and/or based on assessment of need. Emergency services will be utilized when appropriate with the CFSS or FPS being notified at the time of an emergency situation.

- Every child/youth in Christian Heritage foster/adoptive care will receive annual physicals and optical examinations, and semi-annual dental examinations.
- Christian Heritage will accommodate the written and oral communication needs of children/youth by providing, or arranging for, bilingual personnel or translators or arranging for the use of communication technology as needed on an individual basis.
- Christian Heritage will accommodate written and oral communication needs of children/youth when telephone amplification, sign language services, or other communication methods for deaf or hearing impaired persons are needed.
- Christian Heritage will accommodate the written and oral communication needs for any child/youth needing assistance due to special needs or difficulty in communicating their needs due to their situation.
- The child/youth's literacy levels will be assessed in order to accommodate written and oral communication needs as well. This is done at the school the child/youth is enrolled in. If the child is not yet school-aged, this may be done through local early childhood networks in each service area.

SERVICE PLANNING AND MONITORING

Christian Heritage will work diligently to meet the needs and expectations of all children/youth placed in Christian Heritage foster/adoptive homes. The Case Plan is developed by the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) with DHHS or the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) with NFC. Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists work in collaboration with the CFSS and FPS to ensure that service plans are mirroring the outcomes on the Case Plan that need to be achieved. Input should be provided from all parties involved and modifications should be made to the Case plan and services plan as deemed appropriate. Parties involved include but are not limited to the biological family, foster child/youth, foster/adoptive parents, Foster Care Specialists, Child and Family Services Specialists, Family Permanency Specialists, Guardians ad litem, therapists, and any other pertinent team members. This input will come through verbal discussions with the biological and extended family at a minimum of one time monthly during Family Team Meetings.

Procedures:

- Christian Heritage will take into account Case Plan goals, desired outcomes, and time frames for achieving them. Any services and resources that need to be provided in order to assist with achieving the desired outcomes will be supported. Since Christian Heritage takes a family-centered approach, all biological and extended family members will be encouraged to participate as

much as is allowed and advised by the Case Plan. Foster Care Specialists will work hard to engage the family. In addition, foster/adoptive parents will receive training and education on the importance of collaborating and working with the biological families, which will ultimately improve outcomes for the children/youth in care.

- Christian Heritage will work to meet any unmet needs of the child/youth placed within Christian Heritage foster/adoptive homes through utilizing internal and external community resources and supports. All additional resources and supports will be documented in the monthly Progress Reports.
- Christian Heritage foster care staff will ensure that Case Plan goals are on track through regular consultation with the foster/adoptive parents as well as with the child (as age appropriate) and youth. Consultations will take place no less than two times per month for Intensive level foster care placements. There will be at least one consultation (more if needed) for all Essential and Enhanced level placements. Foster Care Specialists need to keep in mind that consultation with foster/adoptive parents is different than the number of expected face-to-face contacts required depending on the child/youth's level of care.
- Foster Care Specialists are responsible for completing the following reports: the Interim Service Plan (ISP), Comprehensive Service Plan (CSP), Monthly Progress Reports, and the Discharge Report. Currently, Christian Heritage utilizes KaleidaCare software to track and report on the child/youth's progress towards the Case Plan goals.
- Interim Service Plans identify introductory goals for the youth for the first thirty days until the Comprehensive Service Plan is completed. Interim Service Plans will be completed within three business days, signed by the Foster Care Specialist and Foster Care Supervisor, and kept in the youth's file.
- Comprehensive Service Plans will take into account permanency goals, cultural issues, assessed needs, and any requirements or court orders documented within the Case Plan. Comprehensive Service Plans will be submitted to individual contracting agencies within 30 days of placement with Christian Heritage. We encourage each Foster Care Specialist to obtain signatures from all family team members. At a minimum, the report is signed by the Foster Care Specialist and the Foster Care Supervisor. A copy of this report is to be kept in the individual's file, as well as sent to the CFSS, FPS, or Probation Officer.
- Monthly Progress Reports provide monthly updates on the youth's goals and their overall progress in the foster home, school, and therapy. Monthly Progress Reports are due by the 10th (NFC) and 14th (DHHS) of each month, or every thirty days (Probation), depending on the contracting agency. A copy of the

Monthly Progress Report is given to the foster parents, and a copy is kept in the youth's file.

- A Discharge Report is required within fourteen days of child/youth departure. The discharge summary shall include a case assessment and documentation of progress towards outcomes and independent living preparation and life skills training, if applicable. Best practice would be that this report is completed within 24 hours of the child/youth's discharge. Children/youth should not be discharged from the program unless the foster family, Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist and the Foster Care Supervisor have been previously notified. Two circumstances which could result in immediate removal of the child/youth without the knowledge of Christian Heritage are: (1) a decision was made in court to remove a child/youth or (2) the foster/adoptive family was suspected of abuse or neglect. Other than those two issues, the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS)/Family Permanency Specialist (FPS), biological family, Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist, and the foster/adoptive family should be working together on a discharge date and plan.
- Foster Care Specialists will notify the Child and Family Services Specialist or Family Permanency Specialist if they happen to learn that a child/youth is being discharged prior to notification. Although foster care as a service may end, this does not mean the case is closed. Only the Child and Family Services Specialist that work for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Probation Officer with Juvenile Probation, and Family Permanency Specialist with NFC know firsthand about case closure.

REPORTING GUIDELINES

Reporting all pertinent information regarding each child/youth placed in Christian Heritage's care is essential. Reporting information helps to ensure the safety of each child/youth and contributes to achieving permanency outcomes. Foster/adoptive parents will utilize Christian Heritage's reporting guidelines to ensure that all critical incidents, emergencies, failure on anyone's part to follow the conditions of a safety plan, significant behavior concerns, serious illnesses, missed appointments, fire and or natural disasters are reported immediately to help ensure the safety and well-being of all children/youth in Christian Heritage's care.

Procedures:

- Internal reporting is done via the Incident Report. The Foster Care Specialist will report orally and submit the incident in writing, in regards to any situation which will affect the child/youth's status (e.g. running away, aggressive behavior, suicidal ideation or attempt, minor illness that does not respond to treatment, major illness, accident, change in school status, inability to accommodate the visitation plan, change in level of care, legal allegations made against a youth or arrest, a youth or his/her family being involved in any high profile event, etc.). These changes in status should be documented in incident logs within **24 hours** of the incident occurring. All Family Team

Meetings are to be documented in the Progress Reports, as are family consultations with foster/adoptive parents and any other non-status issues.

- Foster Care Specialists will adhere to the reporting guidelines document that outlines what types of incidents need to be reported to whom and by when. Foster Care Specialists are responsible for educating foster/adoptive parents on what types of incidents need to be reported and by when so that all children/youth are safe, protected, and receiving the support and services necessary depending on the situation. Current reporting issues and timelines for HHS are:
 - The foster/adoptive parent shall notify their Foster Care Specialist or on-call Specialist as soon as possible, when an individual or individuals have failed to comply with the conditions of any safety plan that is in place.
 - The foster/adoptive parent shall notify their Foster Care Specialist or on-call Specialist as soon as possible when a caregiver (foster parent) or youth, misses an appointment. The foster parent should also provide a reason for the missed appointment.
 - The foster/adoptive parent shall notify their Foster Care Specialist or on-call Specialist immediately, when a critical incident, such as near fatality, death, legal allegations are made against a youth served, arrest, attempted suicide, suicide, or any high profile event involving a youth or youth's family.
- Foster/adoptive parents and Nebraska citizens alike are mandatory reporters by law. Any suspected child abuse or neglect will be communicated to the Foster Care Specialist. This information will be passed up the, "chain of command." The person who observes or suspects child abuse or neglect is responsible for sharing the information with the Nebraska State's Abuse Hotline. That number is **1-800-652-1999**.

PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH

Christian Heritage is committed to helping every child/youth achieve permanency. Christian Heritage foster care staff and Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parents will work in collaboration with the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) or Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) to achieve the permanency goals for children/youth entrusted to our care. Christian Heritage foster care staff will document all efforts made towards the establishment of permanency for children/youth placed with Christian Heritage. Christian Heritage staff and foster/adoptive parents will also follow all established expectations in regards to concurrent permanency plans for all placed individuals. Christian Heritage believes foster/adoptive parents are responsible to the best of their abilities to be involved in the development and facilitation of the child/youth's permanency plan. To ensure this, ongoing consultation, education and

training will be provided. Christian Heritage will provide unbiased, objective, honest, and thorough documentation regarding the child/youth and families that it serves.

Procedures:

- Christian Heritage foster care staff will fulfill all expectations for establishing permanency for every child/youth. Christian Heritage's subcontract agreements and each child/youth's Case Plan outline these expectations that will be adhered to.
- Christian Heritage foster care staff will document all efforts made by Christian Heritage staff, Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parents, biological family, and input by all other family team members. Achieving permanency is of the utmost importance for all children/youth. Concurrent permanency plans will also be identified and are documented and defined in the Case Plan for all individuals placed within Christian Heritage foster/adoptive homes. All documentation (Incident Reports, Comprehensive Service Plans, and Progress Reports) will be submitted to the CFSS or FPS to be included in the Court Report. Progress Reports are submitted monthly; however, Christian Heritage staff will submit any and all documentation requested by the CFSS or FPS outside of normal reporting time frames. Documentation will reflect progress made towards achieving the Case Plan's permanency objectives and outcomes.
- Christian Heritage foster care staff will ensure that children/youth placed within Christian Heritage foster/adoptive homes are available to participate in all appropriate permanency meetings, court, and family visitation plans. Additionally, Christian Heritage foster care staff will participate in the court process when appropriate.

FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT MATCHING AND CHILD PLACEMENT

Christian Heritage staff will ensure that children/youth placed in Christian Heritage's foster homes are the best match possible. Matching is a critical variable and will increase safety, permanency, stability and well-being for each child and youth. Christian Heritage will **ONLY** place children/youth in foster homes which are approved by DHHS and NFC, and are licensed.

Procedures:

- Christian Heritage assigns Foster Care Specialists to licensed foster/adoptive families. Foster Care Specialists are encouraged to build healthy relationships with each foster/adoptive family and be able to identify their strengths and areas to develop. Foster Care Specialists are encouraged to read and review each home study completed on the family assigned to them. This may provide the Foster Care Specialist insight as to how the family functions as a unit and what types of placements will be most appropriate for the family. These variables include but are not limited to the following: types of child/youth characteristics the foster/adoptive family identified as being most equipped

to work with; number and age of biological children already in the home; any special training or populations of children/youth the foster/adoptive parents are experienced in working with (i.e., teen moms, developmentally delayed, etc.); location of the foster/adoptive home compared to the child/youth's home school; the capacity of the foster family based on current placements and biological children; there are not already two foster children in the home with therapeutic needs. Christian Heritage will not delay or deny placement of a child/youth based on his/her race, color, or national origin; this is a requirement of the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA).

- Foster children/youth that become eligible for fos-adopt will be matched with a family willing and able to provide a forever family. Our hope is every family caring for a child/youth that becomes eligible for adoption will be their forever family. Christian Heritage will make every effort to match children/youth with a high likelihood of becoming adoption eligible with foster/adoptive families willing to adopt them. Foster/adoptive families will receive support and education on the adoption process, adoption assistance, and trauma related to separation, loss, and grief. Foster/adoptive parents will receive additional education on attachment issues that are common for children/youth that are adopted.
- Christian Heritage will utilize referral information, the Screening and Assessment Placement Tool and any information available through staffing each individual case prior to communicating any potential foster placement with a potential foster/adoptive family. The only time where an exception to this procedure is acceptable is when there are emergency placements and little to no information is available to the CFSS or FPS.
- When possible, sibling strips need to remain together. All attempts should be exhausted to keep sibling strips together unless there is a safety risk to one or more of the children/youth by one of his/her siblings. In coordination with DHHS or NFC, licensing exceptions may be granted to accommodate sibling placements that may exceed licensing capacity of a foster home.
- Christian Heritage staff should work in collaboration with the CFSS or FPS to ensure that the least restrictive placements have been sought first. Relative or Kinship placements should be investigated and thoroughly sought prior to accepting a child/youth for placement in a Christian Heritage foster/adoptive home. Christian Heritage is able to provide support for Relative and Kinship homes.
- Any Native American child/youth referred for placement is protected under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The act requires preferences be given for potential foster/adoptive care placements in the following order: (1) a member of the child/youth's extended family; (2) other members of the child/youth's tribe; (3) foster homes licensed, approved, or selected by the child/youth's tribe; (4) institution approved by an Indian tribe operated by an

Indian organization. Compliance with these standards is required and documented evidence of adhering to these standards must be maintained by the state through which placement was made. These records must be made available upon request of the United States Secretary of Interior or the Indian child/youth's tribe. Christian Heritage staff is expected to know and adhere to the above standards and appropriately advocate for all Native American children/youth prior to accepting anyone for placement.

- Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists need to work diligently with all foster/adoptive families assigned to them. This support will help reduce and prevent the need to remove children/youth from their home. Appropriate matching at the onset of care is also a critical variable to help prevent placement disruptions. In cases where a child/youth needs to be removed, ample time needs to be given to locate a more suitable and appropriate placement for the individual.

14-DAY NOTICE PROCEDURE:

- Prior to accepting a child/youth for placement, all foster/adoptive parents have the ability to decline. However, once the child/youth is placed in the home, if the placement can no longer be maintained, the foster/adoptive parents can notify their Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist that they are giving notice that the child/youth must be removed from their home within fourteen (14) days. The Foster Care Specialist will then communicate with the designated contracting agency and the Foster Care Supervisor of this situation so arrangements can be made to find another placement for the child/youth.
- **Notices are a last resort situation and notice should not be given unless no other alternatives can be found and all efforts to maintain the placement have been exhausted, the child/youth has been unstable, and the placement is no longer in the best interest of the child/youth, due to the child/youth's behavior.**
- Foster Care Specialists will follow the "Placement Disruption Procedure" in order to prevent unnecessary moves. This includes utilizing the Foster Family Targeted Assessment Support Tool and Pre-Separation Agreement as a last resort to prevent a disruption in placement.
- Once notice has been given, the time frame should not be extended or amended without the Foster Care Director's approval.
- Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists need to provide appropriate support to the child/youth being removed, along with providing additional support to the foster family. Allowing ample time for matching the child/youth being removed is critical and pre-placement visits should occur when possible. Appropriate matching and screening of all children/youth will increase safety, permanency, stability and well-being for those individuals entrusted to our care.

- DHHS has their own protocol in response to foster homes giving notice on placements:
 - When a foster family initiates a disruption (gives notice on a placement) for the first time, the foster home is put “on hold”. This means that the foster family may not provide any respite or take any placements until the hold is lifted. Resource Development (DHHS) contacts Christian Heritage and asks that the Foster Care Supervisor create a written plan, within 10 business days, that will prevent the foster home from having another disruption in the future. This plan may include providing the foster family with additional training or support, requiring the foster family to provide a certain amount of respite prior to taking their next placement, etc. The plan should be finalized within 30 business days to prevent the home from being on hold for a significant amount of time. After the plan is approved by DHHS, the home will be taken off hold.
 - When a foster family initiates a disruption for the second time, the family will be placed on hold again and a meeting will be held with DHHS and Christian Heritage to determine the issues that led to the disruption and how those issues can be addressed in the future. The plan that was created for the first disruption will be reviewed and the team will collaboratively identify what needs to occur for the family to be taken off hold and prevent future disruptions. These steps are not meant to be punitive, but rather to evaluate and decide on next steps in order to prevent future unnecessary disruptions for youth in care.
 - When a foster family initiates a disruption for the third time, the family will be placed on hold again and another meeting between DHHS and Christian Heritage will take place to discuss the events that led to the disruption and review the plan that was created and modified. At this time, there may be discussion regarding whether or not this foster family should continue being used for placement of youth.

CHILD CARE

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Systems agrees to reimburse the child care provider for child care expenses not to exceed DHHS child care rates and only if the following criteria are met:

- Child care may be authorized for the hours when the foster/adoptive parent(s) works or attends school (high school diploma, GED, or Bachelors Degree only).
- In two-parent foster/adoptive families, both foster/adoptive parents must work outside the home or attend school during the hours for which child care is provided.
- Child care may be authorized during the working hours or school hours (to include reasonable travel time) of the parent(s).

- Child care cannot be paid to foster/adoptive parents who provide child care services in their homes.
- Child care may be approved for brief periods of time, consisting of a few hours, to provide supervision for a ward when the foster/adoptive parent(s) must be absent in order to meet the needs of another ward in his/her care (for example, taking a child to therapy when the other foster/adoptive parent is employed and is at work at that time and the child needing supervision cannot accompany the foster parent).
- The amount paid for child care must be within DHHS child care rate. If the provider (of child care) has a contract with DHHS, the contract rate is used. If the provider does not have a contract, the rate must not go above the maximum DHHS rate for the type of care, unit of time, and age of the child as appropriate to the service area location.
- Child care providers must be licensed or approved by DHHS prior to providing care.

BUILDING FAMILY CONNECTION

Part of Christian Heritage's philosophy is to engage biological families by remaining family-centered and strengths-based. Fundamentally, we believe that children/youth need to be with their own families when at all possible. Christian Heritage desires to strengthen families because of our belief that all children/youth need a place to call home.

Procedures:

- Foster Care Specialists will work closely with foster/adoptive families to get them engaged in facilitating parenting time visits between children/youth, and their biological families when part of the case plan. Each visitation plan should be individualized based on the permanency objectives. Visitation is a critical component of helping to determine the likelihood of children/youth returning home. Visits should increase in frequency and duration depending on the progress being made between birth parent(s) and their child(ren). Foster/adoptive parents will receive family-centered practice education during TIPS-MAPP training. In addition, Foster Care Specialists will reinforce family-centered practice during consultations with foster parents.
- Foster/Adoptive parents will be given information at the time of placement when parenting time visits are authorized and part of the reunification plan outlined in the case plan. Foster/adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to be actively involved in parenting time visits that may include, but not be limited to: supervising the parenting time visit between the child/youth and his/her biological family member(s); helping with providing transportation to and from visits; ensuring that foster children are available to participate in parenting time visits.

- Foster Care Specialists and the foster/adoptive parents will work collaboratively to keep biological family members engaged and involved in the goals identified in the Case Plan. Working as part of a team is more effective than the efforts of individuals working alone. This philosophy will be integrated into consultation meetings regularly.
- At the time of placement, the Child and Family Services Specialist/Family Permanency Specialist, Foster Care Specialist, biological family members and child/youth (as appropriate) will have input on the frequency and duration of parenting time visits. The parenting time visitation plan will be documented in the Comprehensive Service Plan and reviewed on a monthly basis per our subcontract agreement.
- Parenting time visitation plans need to be adhered to and cancellations are not permitted without an exception. Two exceptions to cancelling a parenting time visit that is scheduled are; (1) The contracting agency cancels all parenting time visits due to inclement weather; (2) The biological family cancels the parenting time visit due to an emergency or some other extenuating circumstance.

SERVICES FOR BIRTH PARENTS

Christian Heritage desires to engage biological families and link them to formal and informal supports and resources based on individual needs. Biological parents are to be considered the experts on their family. When birth parents are actively involved and engaged in the care of their child/youth, the child/youth is more likely to succeed while placed outside of his/her home. Encouraging family contact is critical to the emotional well-being of the child/youth and will increase the likelihood of better outcomes. Christian Heritage staff should function as orchestrators of change instead of attempting to be the primary change agents. This is why wrap-around services and supports are so critical to the improved functioning of the entire family unit.

Procedures:

- Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists will provide a copy of the Birth Parent Information Manual at the time of placement. This informational handout includes information such as but not limited to the following: parental rights, parental responsibilities, legal implications, Foster Care Specialist's responsibilities, foster/adoptive parent responsibilities and community resources available to parents needing additional supports and information regarding behavior support and behavior management practices within Christian Heritage foster homes.
- Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists will keep the lines of communication open with parents. Foster/adoptive parents will also be encouraged to play an active role in working with birth parents and keeping them informed about their child(ren). Parents should be notified of health appointments, Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, court hearings, Family Team Meetings, co-

curricular activities, etc. Child and Family Services Specialists and Family Permanency Specialists are also responsible for keeping the line of communication open with birth parents. As an agency providing direct care, we need to remain family-centered in our approach and communicate with birth parents as often as is appropriate and needed.

- Foster/adoptive parents will maintain contact with birth parents when appropriate in order to maintain rapport and provide support for reunification when reunification is part of the permanency plan. Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists in collaboration with the Child and Family Services Specialist or Family Permanency Specialist will determine what level of contact is appropriate for foster/adoptive parents to maintain with birth parents.
- Christian Heritage staff will advocate for additional supports and resources for birth parents as deemed appropriate to help facilitate reunification when that goal is part of the permanency plan. Assessing the ecology of birth parents during monthly Family Team Meetings is one way to determine what birth parents need to be successful. Foster Care Specialists will work diligently with foster/adoptive parents to encourage and support additional resources needed for birth parents.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH

Christian Heritage exists today because of the many needs that children/youth have. Our core values, vision, and mission statements govern the work we do with children/youth and their families. Christian Heritage staff provides services that are individualized and that are in the best interest of the individuals we serve and provide care to.

Procedures:

- Foster/adoptive families are carefully screened to ensure that they possess the warmth, nurturing, social skills, judgment, and cultural responsiveness to meet the vast needs of children/youth placed outside of their own homes. Foster/adoptive families receive training in TIPS-MAPP and Common Sense Parenting as foundational training to become licensed. These trainings highlight the need and necessity to establish healthy relationships and boundaries, as well as creating a home atmosphere that is conducive to keeping children/youth safe while they work through the many emotional and attachment issues of being removed from their homes. Not everyone should become foster/adoptive parents because it takes a special person or family to really commit to this work. Good-willed and well-intentioned individuals are carefully screened to ensure that children/youth do not experience even more trauma by being moved from foster home to foster home. Foster/adoptive parents must possess the abilities to meet children/youth's individual needs, set appropriate tolerances and boundaries within their homes, provide vigilant

monitoring, maintain routine and structured schedules, encourage the participation in co-curricular activities, and work alongside birth parents to foster the level of rapport that is necessary to help individuals achieve permanency.

- Foster Care Specialists have the responsibility to ensure that all children/youth on their caseloads are getting all of their needs met. This includes effective collaboration with consumers that provide additional supports to children/youth in care. Children/youth often need counseling to help them with the large array of issues that are affecting them negatively due to their life experiences. There are times, children/youth need special services put in place to help meet their unique needs. Some children/youth have health issues needing frequent medical attention. Many children/youth need educational support and special services to help them achieve more success academically. Other children/youth may need the help of an interpreter or someone who is culturally responsive to their values and cultural heritage. Regardless of the individual need, Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists must ensure that children/youth have their needs met. This includes holding foster/adoptive parents accountable and making sure they are intentional about cooperating with all additional services, supports and resources identified as needing to be put in place for the betterment of the child/youth in care.
- Christian Heritage will document all medical appointments, annual physicals, semi-annual dental cleanings and checkups, dental work, optical appointments, counseling/therapy sessions, family therapy sessions, emergency situations, and all incidents in KaleidaCare. KaleidaCare is a secured data management system. All pertinent medical records and documentation will be filed and kept in the child/youth file. Foster Care Specialists and foster/adoptive parents will communicate all pertinent health information to the birth parents, Child and Family Services Specialist(CFSS), Family Permanency Specialist (FPS), and any other identified family team members.
- Every attempt will be made to maintain the child/youth in their home school district and in their current school. Most often the goal of foster care is reunification with the child/youth returning home in less than a year, keeping them in their current school aids in their stability and well-being.

FAITH-BASED EXPECTATIONS

- Christian Heritage is a faith-based organization and encourages all Christian Heritage Foster Parents and children/youth placed in their care to attend church on a weekly basis.
- In situations where children/youth in placement in a Christian Heritage foster home practice a non-Christian faith (Muslim, Buddhism, Judaism, etc.), the Christian Heritage staff and Foster Parents must allow youth to practice their own faith. Foster Care Specialists and foster/adoptive parents will work with and collaborate with birth parents and children/youth to make

sure that the foster youth placed in foster care have the opportunity to practice the particular non-Christian faith that their parents encourage them to practice. If for example, a youth who has been practicing the Muslim faith decides he/she would like to start attending a Christian church, the Foster Care Specialists and/or the foster/adoptive parents will need to obtain permission from birth parents to attend a Christian church. In cases where the youth in care is an infant/toddler, or developmentally incapable of making decisions related to the practice of any religion, the Foster Care Specialist and/or foster parents will notify the birth parents that it is their practice to attend church on a regular basis and that in the routine care of any foster child(ren) in their care, the foster child(ren) will attend church with them. The foster/adoptive parents and the Foster Care Specialist will be available to answer any questions that the birth parents may have.

- Christian Heritage staff and foster/adoptive families incorporate Christian beliefs, principles and values in the work we do with children and families. However, Christian Heritage staff and foster/adoptive parents do not force, coerce, or manipulate children/youth to practice the Christian faith.
- In cases where the children/youth of birth parents do not attend church or have a faith that they practice, Christian Heritage staff and foster parents will afford them the same courtesy of notifying them that they attend church and that their child(ren) will be attending with them. The foster/adoptive parents and the Foster Care Specialists are available to answer any questions that the birth parents may have.
- Should a youth/child in foster care request to be baptized or to become a member of a church, the Foster Care Specialist and/or the foster/adoptive parents will obtain prior permission by the legal guardian and the birth parents.
- Satanism is not a religion and children/youth will not be able to practice this belief system while under Christian Heritage's care.

PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIVING

- Christian Heritage will ensure that all youth begin to learn independent living skills as soon as possible. Youth age 12 and older (NFC) or age 14 and older (DHHS) will complete the Ansell Casey Life Skills assessment. Assessment information gathered from this instrument will be integrated into the individual's Comprehensive Service Plan. Young adults who come into care close to reaching the age of majority will be given ample opportunities to prepare for living independently. This will include learning life skills that include but are not limited to: money management and budgeting, opening up a checking and savings account, interviewing skills, obtaining a job, chores, cooking skills, locating local community resources and supports, etc. Christian Heritage is committed to helping individuals prepare to live on their own, especially those individuals whose permanency plan is living independently.

The Ansell Casey Life Skills assessment can be found on the internet at www.caseylifeskills.org.

- Young adults whose permanency plan is to transition to independent living will receive a minimum of six months of advance notice of the cessation of any health, financial, or other benefits they were eligible for while wards of the state. Additionally, individuals close to being emancipated will have the opportunity to explore a wide range of housing options. When working with Native American youth transitioning to living independently, efforts will be made to include the tribe. This is also an expectation of ICWA.
- Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists will work collaboratively with the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) or Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) to ensure active involvement and participation in solidifying an Independent Living Plan for all youth whose permanency plan is independent living. Education of those preparing for independent living is crucial to their long-term success. Youth need to know in advance what their source of income will be and where they can access affordable healthcare. The young adults also need community supports and resources in place and need to know how to access these supports and resources on an ongoing basis. In addition, every youth transitioning to living independently needs to be well connected with at least a few adults. Adults who can provide support and answer ongoing questions of the individuals leaving care are a critical variable to their success. Contracting agency personnel are currently providing aftercare support; however, Foster Care Specialists will ensure that each youth leaving Christian Heritage's program to live independently has Christian Heritage's contact information.
- Currently, contracting agencies are primarily responsible for aftercare planning. However, Christian Heritage desires to play an active role in aftercare planning and support to better meet the individual needs of child/youth departing services from Christian Heritage's Foster Care Program.
- Christian Heritage staff will ensure that all departing children/youth will have access to their health records. Birth parents who have been actively involved in their child or youth's care should be knowledgeable of their son or daughter's health status and medical history. Birth parents will receive any health records they may not have in order to maintain the continuity of the child/youth's primary care physician. Children/youth who have been prescribed any prescription drugs due to illness or any psychotropic or over-the-counter medications will take those medications with them at discharge. Additionally, discharge recommendations regarding health care and all other therapeutic needs will be documented in the discharge summary.

TEEN MOTHERS

- Foster youth who have children of their own require additional training and awareness of community resources from the foster/adoptive parents they live with. While the children of teen parents who are not state wards are the financial responsibility of the teen parent, foster/adoptive parents are expected to be attentive to the safety and needs of such children and inform the Foster Care Specialist of any concerns immediately. Additional resources within the community that can be accessed by teen parents include but are not limited to: WIC program, hospital education programs, Crisis Pregnancy Center, and Jessi's Tree.

CLOTHING INVENTORY

Christian Heritage agrees to complete a clothing inventory on all children/youth that enter out of home care. This inventory will document all personal belongings of the child/youth at the time of placement. The inventory shall be dated and signed by Christian Heritage staff, the youth, foster parents, and their birth parents (if available). If the child/youth is unable or refuses to sign the clothing inventory, this shall be documented on the inventory itself by the Foster Care Specialist.

Procedures:

- Foster/adoptive parents are responsible for updating the inventory and keeping it current. Clothing inventories tend to change considerably following birthdays, Christmas, and other special events.
- The Foster Care Specialist, in conjunction with the child/youth's foster/adoptive parents, is responsible to make sure a clothing inventory is completed when the child/youth enters the program. Foster/adoptive parents should complete this form with the assistance of the child/youth. This will document all personal belongings that the child/youth has with him/her.
- Child and Family Services Specialists (CFSS) or Family Permanency Specialists (FPS) shall assess, in conjunction with Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialists, the child/youth's clothing needs. After the determination of need and length of time the child/youth will be out of home, along with other factors, those responsible may provide for clothing up to the recommended clothing allotment. Clothing is expected to be in reasonable shape, and to fit the child/youth. The recommended clothing allotment includes:
 - Socks (7 pair)
 - Underwear (7 pair)
 - Bras (3)
 - Pants/shorts (seasonal) (5)
 - Shirts (5)

- Seasonal Coat (1)
 - Shoes (2 pair)
- The CFSS/FPS may, in rare and special circumstances, bring the child/youth's clothing inventory up to the recommend clothing allotment, per a clothing voucher or shopping at any variety of community resource closets or stores.
 - Christian Heritage's foster/adoptive parents shall take reasonable steps to ensure the security of all personal belongings owned by the child/youth. This is done in order to prevent the theft, damage, or destruction beyond normal wear and tear on such belongings. Failure to take such steps may result in the imposition of a damage assessment against the foster/adoptive parents.
 - Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parents shall provide each child and youth with personal grooming supplies. Such items include but are not limited to: soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, toothpaste and toothbrush, comb, brush, basic haircuts with parental permission or that of the legal guardian.
 - The Foster Care Specialist will provide a current inventory to the child/youth, birth family and CFSS/FPS at the time of discharge. The Foster Care Specialist will ensure that all personal belongings of the child/youth are returned; in cases of immediate removal, the CFSS/FPS will receive the belongings upon discharge or as soon thereafter as possible.

The Foster Care Closet is a wonderful community resource available to Lincoln and Omaha. The Foster Care Closet has a contract with DHHS to provide children who have just been removed from their home with five outfits. Additionally, they offer their Intake Care Center to caseworkers and children as a comfortable and kid-friendly setting while placement is being located, if needed. The Foster Care Closet is also available to provide foster children with clothing twice per year (one set of outfits for Spring/Summer, and one set of outfits for Fall/Winter). This can be arranged by calling and making an appointment with Leigh Esau at (402) 617-0667. If a child that has just been placed in your home is in need of clothing right away, contact the Intake Care Center at (402) 617-4667.

EDUCATION SERVICES

Christian Heritage utilizes the local public school system to meet the educational needs of children and youth; home schooling of foster children/youth is prohibited.

Procedures:

- All school-age children and youth are expected to attend school as part of their care at Christian Heritage. Foster/adoptive parent(s) and Foster Care Specialists are expected to work closely with school professionals to meet the

educational and behavioral needs of each student. Educational goals should be integrated into each child/youth's service plan.

- At the time of placement, educational needs of each child and youth are assessed to include (as appropriate) but not be limited to: present grade and/or total number of credits earned, achievement test scores, Individual Education Plans (IEP's), behavioral reports, IQ tests, etc.
- Foster/adoptive parent(s) and Foster Care Specialists, along with public school personnel, provide input on the Individual Education Plans (IEP's) for any child/youth determined to qualify for special education services.

MEDICATION PRACTICES

Christian Heritage foster parents will appropriately dispense medications and not use deteriorated, outdated, or unlabeled medications. Foster parents are trained on appropriate medication practices to assure appropriate monitoring and dispensing practices are adhered to. The assigned Foster Care Specialist provides this training to foster parents once a child/youth is placed in their home.

Procedures:

- Children/youth have the right to know and understand why they are being prescribed a particular medication, and all potential side effects of a particular medication must be communicated. Individuals have the right to refuse medication unless the legal guardian requires it based on a doctor's or psychiatrist's recommendation. The legal guardian (Child and Family Services Specialist or Child and Family Outcome Monitor) must be notified of all medications being prescribed for children/youth and must approve the medication prior to dispensing. Documentation that the legal guardian approved the medication must be documented in KaleidaCare.
- Any child/youth that is prescribed medication must have a current medication log that is filled out each time medication is dispensed. Medication logs are required to be turned into the Foster Care Specialist at the end of each month. A separate medication log must be completed for every medication. New medication logs need to be filled out at the beginning of each month.
- The medication log shall include: the child/youth's name, the name of medication given, the date, time, dosage, route or each provision, schedule or provision, any refusal by the child/youth and foster parent's name that dispensed the medication. The child/youth's medication allergies and sensitivities, if any must be documented on the medication log. The medication log shall be made available to contracting agencies upon request.
- Christian Heritage shall include on all intake and discharge forms: the medication(s) needs of the child/youth; medication(s) prescribed to the child/youth while in care; the individual receiving medication (foster parent or

Foster Care Specialist) at placement for the child/youth; name of person(s) who received medication(s) for the child/youth at discharge.

- Foster parents will practice the 5 RIGHTS when dispensing medications. Foster parents are expected to read the label on the bottle each time prior to dispensing medication.
 - Right Person
 - Right Time
 - Right Dose
 - Right Route
 - Right Medication

- Foster parents will store medication in a locked and secure area per COA (Council on Accreditation) requirements, and separate over-the-counter (OTC), internals, externals, and Schedule II's.

- Never leave child/youth unattended when he/she is taking medication.

- Document all dispensed medication on medication log - sign immediately, record all OTC, note any changes (documentation by psychiatrist/physician).

- Medication education needs to occur: pharmacy printout, child/youth should know outcomes and side effects of their medication, legal guardian (Child and Family Services Specialist or Child and Family Outcome Monitor) permission obtained before going on a prescribed medication.

- Communication: Accurately reflect on the medication log any changes in the medication, any medication errors, and child/youth reporting any adverse reactions.

- Procedure for Disposal of Medications: All deteriorated, outdated, or unlabeled medications will be given to the Foster Care Specialist to be disposed of. A Medication Destruction Form must be completed on all deteriorated, outdated, unlabeled, or ended medications. A copy of the Medication Destruction Form will be kept in the child/youth's file and the deteriorated, outdated, unlabeled and ended medications will be taken to a local pharmacy for their disposal.

- Procedure for Transportation of Medications: All medications will be transported to their designation (new foster home, respite home or visitation) in the original prescription bottle. Additional empty, labeled bottles can be provided by the pharmacy upon request.

All medications will be transported by an adult and will pass from one adult hand to another adult's hand, upon arrival at the destination. No medication(s) will be accessible to the youth during the transportation process.

***When a child is in respite or on a visit, only enough prescribed medication dosage shall be sent for the duration of the respite stay or visit. These portions shall be stored in additional, labeled bottles provided by the pharmacy upon request.**

All medications will be accounted for, in writing, upon delivery along with a copy of the youth's individual medication log. Each individual medication log should be signed and dated upon receipt of the new responsible adult.

Youth are **not** allowed to be in possession of prescribed medication **at any time** unless medication is such that it is required to be used PRN for treatment of emergencies and prescribing physician and CFSS/FPS approve.

Such medications would include but are not limited to:

- Inhalers/medication used to treat asthma
- Insulin/medication to treat diabetes
- EpiPen/medication used to treat allergies
- Other as agreed upon by CFSS/FPS and physician

Youth must receive appropriate training necessary to ensure thorough understanding of the type, reason for use, dose, route and potential side effects of medication.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Children/youth in the foster care system often present behavioral problems that interfere with their daily functioning and ability to cope in a healthy manner. Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parents are trained in Common Sense Parenting and TIPS-MAPP as a foundation to deal with and manage the array of behavior problems that may manifest while working with children/youth in care.

Procedures:

- Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parents will utilize techniques learned in Common Sense Parenting training to appropriately modify behavior. Christian Heritage desires that children/youth learn the skills necessary to help them in their day-to-day functioning. Foster/adoptive parents will model socially acceptable behaviors and take a strengths-focused approach in working with children/youth.
- Positive reinforcement and praise for socially appropriate behavior should be utilized on a daily basis. Praising approximations of desired behavior is also critical in shaping behavior.
- Foster/adoptive parents will role-model appropriate social and independent living skills on a daily basis. Children/youth learn by observing how foster/adoptive parents interact with others, how they treat others, how they

solve problems, how they deal with conflict, how they manage their time, how they clean, how they spend money, etc. Modeling is an effective way to teach skills to children/youth.

- Natural and logical consequences will be utilized for negative behaviors and choices (i.e., poor grades due to not studying or loss of job for constantly showing up late). Response costs will be utilized for negative or inappropriate behaviors as well (i.e., loss of a privilege, time out, extra chore, etc.).
- Foster/adoptive parents will not allow or tolerate bullying, harassment, and violence between sibling strips or between the foster children/youth placed in their care.
- Foster/adoptive parents will receive training on how to identify antecedents to behavior so that they can be more proactive in their approach in preventing serious problems within their home. At times, it may be necessary to implement a behavior management plan to support the placement and to better support foster/adoptive parents. Behavior management plans will be individualized and address the immediate concerns. Behavior management plans need to be signed by the foster/adoptive parent(s), child or youth and the Foster Care Specialist overseeing the foster home and the care of each child/youth on the Foster Care Specialist's caseload.
- Foster/adoptive parents will learn to refrain from getting into power struggles with children/youth. Foster/adoptive parents should not focus on trying to control children/youth, but rather should teach skills that will allow them to manage and control themselves. Foster/adoptive parents can't control many of the behaviors children/youth present, but they do have the ability to control themselves and respond calmly and professionally.
- Foster/adoptive parents will use self-control and remain calm and rational when problem behaviors manifest. While foster/adoptive parents may feel upset and angry, they need to think about what the children/youth in their home have been through and why they are acting the way they are. When staff and foster/adoptive parents make every effort to remain calm in crisis situations, the outcome will be much better for everyone involved. Angry and upset adults add to the energy of a crisis and only escalate the situation, instead of helping to diffuse or calm the situation down. Although this is difficult, as foster/adoptive parents become familiar with the patterns and behavior of the foster children/youth, corrective teaching will become much easier.
- The three most common techniques for issuing a response cost or negative consequence are: **Time Out** - usually one minute for every year of age for young children. More time can be used to calm down older, escalated youth. Children 12 or older should not be placed in time out unless the individual is developmentally delayed and time outs work for the individual. **Restriction of**

Privileges - privileges can be contingent and conditional upon behavior. Find out what is important or motivates the child or youth and tie the behavior to the use of the privilege. **Extra Chores** - do not bury children or youth with an excessive burden, but use an extra chore to discourage negative behavior. Some foster/adoptive parents use a job jar. When the child or youth earns consequences for misbehavior, they pick a piece of paper from the jar that has a chore written on it and must complete the task. Do not give children/youth meaningless or tedious work as a means of punishment. Christian Heritage does not allow or tolerate using punishment as a consequence for misbehavior.

- Disapproved Discipline Techniques: Physical punishment or abuse, or threats of physical punishment; denial of necessities; chemical or mechanical restraints; derogatory or humiliating remarks; abusive or profane language; yelling or screaming; threats or intimidation, punitive work or exercise assignments, depriving one of a youth's rights and needs (i.e., food, birth parent contact, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc.); seclusion or isolation; taking away a family visit as a means of discipline. Any foster/adoptive parent(s) found to engage in any of the above behaviors will be reported to Child Protective Services, the child/youth's Child and Family Services Specialist or Family Permanency Specialist, the Christian Heritage Foster Care Supervisor and the Foster Care Program Director. The foster/adoptive home in most cases would be put immediately on hold while the contracting agency or designee conducts an investigation on the foster/adoptive parent(s).
- Foster/adoptive parents are prohibited from using safety holds or manual guidance except under emergency conditions where there is a clear and imminent threat to the physical safety and well-being of the child or youth, or others. Any hold or manual guidance situation must be immediately reported to the Foster Care Specialist, who in turn will report this information to the Foster Care Supervisor.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Christian Heritage will protect the legal and ethical rights of all children/youth by informing clients of their rights and responsibilities, providing fair and equitable care, and providing clients with sufficient information to make an informed choice about receiving services through Christian Heritage. Information concerning the services performed for birth parents and children/youth is confidential. Our work assignments involve the use of information that is the confidential property of the child/youth being served. Employees, foster, and adoptive parents are forbidden to disclose protected child/youth information in any way unless expressly authorized to do so by a signed consent to share or release confidential information provided by the child/youth's legal guardian. Employees who disclose protected and confidential information without proper authorization are subject to corrective disciplinary action up to and including termination. Foster and adoptive parents who disclose protected and confidential information without proper authorization are subject to corrective action plans and possible licensure revocation.

Procedures:

- At the time of placement, Christian Heritage staff will inform the child/youth and the legal guardian, prior to his or her disclosure of confidential or private information, about circumstances when Christian Heritage may be legally or ethically permitted to, or required to release such information without the client's consent (i.e., duty to warn or reporting child abuse and/or neglect to Child Protective Services).
- If a child is under the age of 7 or does not possess the cognitive capabilities to understand potential circumstances when Christian Heritage may be legally or ethically permitted or required to release confidential information, Christian Heritage staff may refrain from informing the child of the exceptions of confidential information.
- If an exception is determined to exist, documentation of the nature of the exception will be noted as an incident in KaleidaCare. The child's CFSS or FPS will be informed anytime Child Protective Services needs to be called to report abuse or neglect and it will be documented in KaleidaCare as well.
- When Christian Heritage receives a request to exchange or release confidential information about a client, the following steps are required:
 1. Christian Heritage will determine whether the reason to exchange or release information is valid.
 2. Christian Heritage will obtain written authorization from the client, client's parents or legal guardian.
- Christian Heritage's exchange or release of information forms contain the following elements: name of the person whose information will be exchanged or released; signature of the person whose information will be released (or signature of the parent or legal guardian of an individual who is unable to provide his/her own authorization); specific information being exchanged or released; purpose for which the information will be used; date the release takes effect; date that the release expires, not to exceed 90 days from when authorization is given.
- Christian Heritage will offer a copy of the signed exchange or release of information form to the child/youth, client's parent, or legal guardian, authorizing the disclosure of confidential information, and will place a copy in the child/youth's file.
- Christian Heritage will obtain informed, written consent from a child/youth, parent, or legal guardian prior to recording, photographing, or filming for the purposes of publication. Christian Heritage staff will file a signed copy of the permission form in cases where recording, photographing or filming is granted.

This is not a practice that Christian Heritage normally engages in; however, there may be a situation where Christian Heritage may seek an exception.

- Unless otherwise authorized by Christian Heritage or an outside agency/stakeholder, it is the responsibility of all employees to maintain the confidentiality of proprietary information of Christian Heritage and the children/youth it serves. This includes but is not limited to: all child/youth information, performance appraisals, disciplinary action, and payroll information.
- Foster/adoptive parents will abide by the privacy regulations issued under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) to maintain the service recipient's privacy and assure protection of the disclosure of information concerning child/youth in care. Information regarding the individual and his or her family will be released only after appropriate written consent or court order is received, or if the individual poses an immediate danger to self or others. When current or former licensed foster parents receive a request for protected and confidential information, they should refer the requesting party to Christian Heritage, to the Foster Care Supervisor of the local Christian Heritage office. Once a signed Release of Information is received by the child/youth's legal guardian, then the foster parent will be instructed to provide the protected and confidential information that has been requested of them. A copy of the Release of information and length of time that the release is in effect, and all other related information on the release, will be documented in a data management system used by foster care staff, and placed in the child/youth's permanent file.
- Foster/adoptive parents cannot release or publish any identifying information of children placed in their care without permission from the child/youth's legal guardian. This includes not making mention of foster children on Facebook posts or posting any pictures that include the foster child.
- A current or former client or client's legal representative may review confidential documents about themselves only. No other persons mentioned in the file will be allowed to be reviewed. This review must be done in the presence of a Christian Heritage Foster Care Program Director or the CEO on Christian Heritage's premises. If the current client is a state ward, authorization to review must come from the legal guardian.

If it is determined the information contained in the file would be harmful to the youth, then there is a potential that the request will be denied based upon that youth's unique circumstances.

If Christian Heritage determines that allowing the client or family to review a client's case record would be harmful, and applicable law neither prohibits nor requires direct case record access by persons serve, then:

- Christian Heritage’s CEO will review and approve in writing, the reasons for such a refusal and this documentation is placed in the client’s record; and
- Christian Heritage permits a qualified professional to review the records on behalf of the person(s) served, provided that the professional signs a written statement that the information that is determined to be harmful, will not be provided to the person served.

FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND DOCUMENTATION

Without some biographical information, foster/adoptive parents are unable to do their job as foster/adoptive parents. However, the bulk of the information maintained on any child/youth must be kept in the youth’s personal client file and locked in a file cabinet at the Christian Heritage office, not at the foster home.

Procedure:

- Should it be discovered that foster/adoptive parents have file information they should not have, that information must be given to the Foster Care Specialist to be kept in the child/youth’s confidential client file. Foster/adoptive parents may have the biographical and contact information obtained at the time of placement in the placement packet, as well as copies of the service plan reviews that are written and submitted by the Foster Care Specialist.

CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Christian Heritage will protect the legal and ethical rights of all children/youth by informing them of their rights and responsibilities, providing fair and equitable care, and providing children/youth with sufficient information to make an informed choice about receiving services through Christian Heritage.

Procedures:

- At the time of placement, Christian Heritage staff will provide the legal guardian and the child/youth, if age appropriate, a written summary of the Youth Rights and Responsibilities. Included in this summary is a description of how to file a grievance against Christian Heritage foster parents and staff. A written summary, along with a copy of the Grievance Form, will be incorporated into each Christian Heritage placement packet at admission.
- Christian Heritage staff will verbally review the Youth Rights and Responsibilities with the youth, provide clarification, and answer questions as needed to ensure the child or youth has a solid grasp and understanding of the written client rights summary, as well as the process for filing a grievance.
- If a child is under the age of 7 or does not possess the cognitive capabilities to understand their rights or responsibilities, the summary form does not have to

be provided. If an exception is determined to exist, documentation of the nature of the exception will be noted on the client rights acknowledgement form and will then be placed in the child's file.

- The ONLY time Christian Heritage can release information without the client's consent is in situations where we are required to do so by law or court order. For example, if subpoenaed to testify in court or if we have to cooperate with an investigation being conducted. Also, we have a "duty to warn" others if a client ever makes threatening statements about harming a staff member, teacher at school, therapist, etc. In addition, we are responsible for reporting self-harm statements and issues without the client's consent in order to keep the client safe.
- Once the child/youth has received the written summary, Christian Heritage staff will have the child/youth sign an acknowledgement form confirming receipt of the summary of the Youth Rights and Responsibilities and Grievance Form. Once signed, a copy of the acknowledgement form will be placed in the client's file.
- A written summary of client rights and their responsibilities will be posted in the reception areas of all service delivery locations.

SELF HARM & HARM TO OTHERS RISK SCREENING: (The Day of Placement)

Safety of children/youth is of the utmost importance. Christian Heritage is committed to ensuring the personal safety of every child and youth entrusted to our care. Assessing risk and potential self-harm or harm to others issues is critical and not something that can be taken lightly. Every child and youth is assessed for risk and potential self-harm or harm to others at the onset of services.

Procedures:

- Foster Care Specialists will complete a Level 1 Risk Screen for all children/youth *on the day of placement*. In addition to the Level 1 Risk Screen, Foster Care Specialists are required to thoroughly read referral information to assess if the child/youth has any history of self-harm or harm to others such as physically assaultive behavior towards people, property or pets.

The Level 1 Risk Screen assesses the following areas:

1. Any significant changes to the child/youth in areas that include but are not limited to: behaviors, mood, school/work, interests/friends, activities, eating and sleeping habits, hygiene, health/medication, etc.
2. Any significant events that have impacted the child/youth in areas that include but are not limited to: health, relationship/divorce/marriage within the child/youth's family, accidents, anniversary of a significant event, legal issues/gangs, death or other loss in the family, birth, etc.

3. Whether the child/youth is concerned about his/her safety or that of anyone else in his/her family.
 4. Whether the child/youth has a history of hurting him/herself or someone in the child/youth's family has a history of hurting him/herself.
 5. Whether the child/youth has any thoughts of hurting him/herself in the past week.
 6. If the child/youth or anyone in his/her family has a history of hurting others or animals.
 7. Whether the child/youth has had any thoughts or plans of hurting anyone or anything within the past week.
- Foster Care Specialists will complete the Level 2 Self-Harm Risk Screen and/or the Harm To Others Risk Screen, if any information gathered on the Level 1 Risk Screen brings to light concerns about potential harm to self or harm to others.

The Level 2 Self-Harm Screen assesses the following areas:

1. Whether the child or youth made a statement or gesture indicating thoughts of hurting or killing himself/herself (i.e., verbal statement(s) indicating self-harm, third party reports of self-harm ideation or gestures, history of self-harm ideation or gestures, recent suicide of a significant other or anniversary of a suicide in the family or death of a close family member).
2. Whether the child or youth has done anything that could be considered as putting affairs in order (i.e., giving away possessions, writing goodbye letters, etc.).
3. Whether the child or youth has a plan or access to a plan (i.e., plan indicating method and time, access to knives/sharps, drugs, guns, ropes, car, etc.).
4. Assessing what supports or resources are keeping the child or youth safe and would help prevent him/her from carrying out a plan to harm self.
5. A plan of action will be completed in collaboration with the Foster Care Supervisor: completion of a self-harm agreement, foster/adoptive family safety plan, emergency intervention and assessment as needed.
6. The Foster Care Supervisor will notify the Foster Care Program Director **immediately** as this is considered a Critical Incident Report.
7. Additionally, the Foster Care Specialist will notify the appropriate parties involved in the child/youth's care, i.e. legal guardian, therapist, parent(s) as appropriate.

The Level 2 Harm To Others Risk Screen assesses the following areas:

1. Whether the child/youth or a family member has made a statement or gesture indicating thoughts of hurting or killing anyone or anything else, i.e. (verbal statements, notes, emails, posts on social media, third party reports of harm to others; gestures or ideations of harm to others; history, frequency and intensity of harm to others, threats, gestures or ideations of harm to others; history of physical violence within the birth family or witness of violence towards others; history, frequency and intensity of physical aggression towards property and/or pets; location(s) where prior acts of violence/aggression occurred; History of prior mental health/behavioral health treatment for aggression/violence towards others; is the child/youth currently on medication for anger/mood regulation; if the anger/aggression is new, was the medication started recently?
2. Whether the child/youth and/or family member has a plan or access to a plan of harm towards others, i.e. plan for method and timing (where and when), availability to means (knives, sharps, weapons), if there is a history of aggression or harm to others, what was the prior method, means and availability of that means at this point in time, etc.
3. Whether the child/youth or family members have supports and/or resources that would provide protective factors to keep everyone safe or prevent them from harming others, i.e. availability of responsible and supportive family members or others, motivation to get help/desire to discontinue violent patterns of behavior, problem solving skills/coping skills that have been developed, religious beliefs, is there a therapist available and involved, is medication prescribed and being taken as prescribed, is there a probation officer involved, etc.
4. A plan of action will be completed by the Foster Care Specialist and the foster parent(s), in collaboration with the Foster Care Supervisor, which may include, but not be limited to the completion of an agreement against harm towards others, foster/adoptive families involvement for increased supervision, development and implementation of an anger management plan, as well as emergency intervention and additional assessments for risk of harm towards others, as needed.
5. The Foster Care Supervisor will notify the Foster Care Program Director **immediately** as this is considered a Critical Incident Report. Additionally, the Foster Care Specialist will notify the appropriate parties involved in the child/youth's care, i.e. legal guardian, therapist, parent(s) as appropriate.

- The Foster Care Specialist in collaboration with his/her supervisor will decide on the best course of action to ensure the safety and well-being of every child and youth. In situations where it is determined that a child or youth is at risk of harming him/herself or at risk of harm towards others, immediate intervention is necessary. This may include calling 911, transporting the child/youth to be assessed at a hospital, or calling the police to get help transporting a child/youth to the hospital for further assessment.
- In situations where it is determined that completing an agreement against self-harm or harm towards others, is appropriate, the foster/adoptive parents must ensure vigilant monitoring of the child/youth to ensure safety. Vigilant monitoring of foster children/youth is critical to the safety and success of each child or youth regardless of whether self-harm or harm to others is a concern.

At **NO TIME** will a child/youth be able to remain in a foster/adoptive home if there is a real and valid concern that a child or youth is in danger or has a plan to hurt him/herself or has a plan to hurt others. Neither Christian Heritage's employees nor foster parents have the education, clinical skills or authority to decide whether a child/youth is just seeking attention. It is at this time, that additional medical and/or mental health assessment and evaluation is necessary. It is the responsibility of the Foster Care Specialist, in consultation with his/her Foster Care Supervisor, to contact the legal guardian of the child/youth to determine when, how and where, further medical and/or mental health risk assessments are secured, on behalf of the child/youth and all other's safety.

- Foster Care Specialists are required to report immediately to their direct Foster Care Supervisor anytime there is heightened risk or actual self-harm or harm to others. No statement or gesture should be taken lightly. Christian Heritage staff are required to take all statements and gestures as serious and potentially life threatening. When a child/youth makes a threat against another person, it is the duty of the Foster Care Specialist and/or the Foster Care Supervisor to follow through with the agencies, "duty to warn" policy.
- Foster Care Supervisors are required to report immediately to the Foster Care Program Director after hearing of a self-harm or harm to others incident. A course of action will be decided upon, depending on the individual situation and circumstances surrounding the concern being addressed.

SELF HARM & HARM TO OTHERS PROTOCOL: (After placement is made to the date of discharge.)

- The Foster Care Specialist assigned to your foster home is available to assist you when incidents of risk and safety arise, in relation the potential for self-harm and/or harm to others.
- Should you, as a foster parent, become aware of any overt or covert signs or reports of self-harm or harm towards others, it is your duty to share this

information with your assigned Foster Care Specialist, or his/her supervisor, and/or the on-call Foster Care Specialist as soon as is practical, in order to assure safety for all parties involved. The Foster Care Specialists have been trained and are supported to deal with situations and incidences involving risk and safety. However, should there be an *immediate safety concern* that requires immediate intervention and or medical assistance, please call 911 or the appropriate law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction. Then, as soon as is practical, contact the Foster Care Specialists or have another capable party contact the Foster Care Specialist and communicate the current situation and the actions that have been taken.

- Once you have contacted the Foster Care Specialist, make sure to continue to provide all the necessary supervision of the child/youth that is required, in order to assure safety and/or to manage risk for everyone involved and present.
- When the Foster Care Specialist arrives at your foster home, it is their job to assess the risk and/or safety of the child/youth and all others. It is your job, at that point, to provide all the necessary information to the Foster Care Specialist. It is extremely important for the Foster Care Specialist to have all the information that they will need, in order to determine if the situation is one of “risk” or “safety”. This assessment for either risk or safety will impact the level of care and services required to address the immediate needs of safety for the child/youth and all others.
- If the concern and/or risk involves self-harm or suicidal remarks, then the Foster Care Specialist will follow *Christian Heritage’s Suicide Prevention Protocol*, which includes; Initial Assessment, Agreement Against Self-Injury and/or a Medical/Mental Health Assessment at an appropriate hospital/ medical facility or a Mental Health Center. The Foster Care Specialist will, as soon as practical, involve his/her Foster Care Supervisor in any situation involving risk for self-harm or injury, in order to seek support, guidance and direction.
- If the concern and /or risk involves statements of aggression or threats of harm towards others, then the Foster Care Specialist will follow *Christian Heritage’s Harm To Others Prevention Protocol*, which includes; Initial Assessment, Agreement Against Harm Towards Others and/or a Medical/Mental Health Assessment at an appropriate hospital/medical facility or a Mental Health Center. The Foster Care Specialist will, as soon as is practical, involve his/her Foster Care Supervisor in any situation involving risk harm towards others, in order to seek support, guidance and direction.
- When the child/youth enters into an Agreement Against Self Injury or Agreement Against Harm Towards Others, the Foster Care Specialist will share this agreement with the foster parents, the child/youth, the legal guardian,

any therapist involved with the child/youth, their Foster Care Supervisor and any other interested parties.

- When the child/youth enters into an Agreement Against Self Injury or Agreement Against Harm Towards Others, you, as the foster parent will have some responsibilities in providing on-going support and guidance in reducing and/or managing the risk for the child/youth in your care. This could include, but not be limited to; line of sight supervision, putting away or removal of items that could be a potential weapon against themselves or others, being available to talk to the child/youth and provide reassurance, transporting the child/youth to counseling, monitoring the youth for self-harm or injury, providing assistance with problem-solving techniques, helping the child/youth develop more appropriate coping skills or attention seeking skills, helping the child/youth be more active, assisting with medication management and monitoring for negative side effects or progress, etc...
- At **NO TIME** will a child/youth be able to remain in a foster/adoptive home if there is a real and valid concern that a child or youth is in danger or has a plan to hurt him/herself or has a plan to hurt others. Neither Christian Heritage's employees nor their foster parents have the education, clinical skills or authority to determine whether a child/youth is just seeking attention.

It is at this time, that additional medical and/or mental health assessment and evaluation is necessary. It is the responsibility of the Foster Care Specialist, in consultation with his/her Foster Care Supervisor, to contact the legal guardian of the child/youth to determine when, where and how, further medical and/or mental health risk assessments are secured, to manage the safety of everyone involved.

- Should the child/youth in your foster home require a temporary higher level of care to stabilize his/her emotions and/or behaviors, it is the desire of Christian Heritage, when practical, to have the child/youth return to your foster home, as long as you are able and willing to provide for his/her needs upon their release from the higher level of care.

However, when a child/youth requires a higher level of care, prior to their discharge from the temporary higher level of care, a formal request would be made to either the Foster Care Supervisor and/or the Foster Care Specialist by the legal guardian for placement back into agency supported foster care, and specifically to your foster home. At this point in time, the Foster Care Supervisor will be seeking information related to whether, Christian Heritage, as an agency and you, as the foster parent(s) would be capable of meeting the on-going needs of the child/youth at the Agency Supported Foster Care level of care. If it is determined that this is not the case, then the child/youth would be deferred for placement and services. If it is determined that Agency Supported Foster Care would be the appropriate level of care, then the Foster Care Supervisor would contact you to consider the return of the child/youth to

your foster home. It is Christian Heritage's responsibility to make sure that we have alleviated the risk and/or safety issues that resulted in the child/youth's placement at a higher level of care and talk with you about the type(s) of support you would need/require, so that the child/youth could successfully return to your foster home and care.

- Should appropriate care and support of the child/youth be able to be provided in your foster home, then placement would be scheduled with the legal guardian and supportive services of your foster home would resume as planned and needed.
- Should appropriate care and support *not* be able to be provided, then subsequent placement for the child/youth would be sought through other available resources.

HOME VISITS

Christian Heritage advocates home visits for children and youth with their birth parent(s) or extended family members. Maintaining family connections is essential for their emotional well being. Home visits should be granted when they are in the best interest of the child/youth or when mandated by a court order. Prior to home visits being established the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) or Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) must assess the appropriateness of a visit to the child/youth's biological home to ensure safety. Parenting time visits are a formal service where an employee monitors the interactions and conversation that occurs between birth parent(s) and their child(ren). In some situations, it may be most appropriate for the foster parent to supervise the visit between the child/youth and his/her parent(s). Those individuals providing parenting time visits are required to supervise the visit 100% of the time unless semi-supervised visits have been approved.

Procedures:

- CFSS/FPS must give prior approval before any home visits can take place between the child/youth and his/her parent(s).
- Based on the Case Plan, the goals of each visit should be discussed between the foster/adoptive parent(s) and the child/youth prior to visits occurring. This will help set the child/youth up for more success. Successful home visits are an indicator that a child/youth is getting closer to returning home as reunification is the permanency plan.
- Foster Care Specialists cannot authorize home visits at their discretion. The CFSS/FPS must authorize all visits before they happen. Foster/adoptive parent(s) and Foster Care Specialists should assess and ask the following questions minimally prior to any visit unless a court order states something different. What are the child/youth's behaviors that need to be changed before it will be safe or beneficial for a child/youth to visit his/her birth parent(s)?

What behaviors must the birth parent(s) change or what must be changed in the home environment before that environment will be safe or beneficial for the child/youth to return home for a visit? If home visits are not yet conducive because the environment is not safe due to cleanliness or some other safety concern not involving a child/youth being able to have contact with his/her parent(s), can an alternative, neutral location be established so that family connections can be maintained (day visits)? What needs to be put in place to help facilitate home visits for children/youth whose permanency plan is reunification?

- Foster/adoptive parent(s) will work towards building rapport with birth parent(s) by spending some time with them prior to and following home visits. Goals for the home visit should be discussed prior to the child/youth leaving for his/her home visit or at the time the foster parent(s) drop the child/youth off at his/her home. Following each home visit, foster/adoptive parent(s) will talk with birth parent(s) about how the visit went and how the child/youth did towards their goals. If the Foster Care Specialist drops off or picks up a child/youth, they are responsible for gathering home visit information and sharing it with the foster/adoptive parent(s).
- When previous recommendations against a home visit have been made by a professional working with the family or child/youth (i.e. psychiatrist, family therapist, child/youth's mental health provider, etc.) the CFSS/FPS must approve any home visit under consideration. The only exceptions to this are when home visits are court ordered or the CFSS/FPS communicates in writing something different. **Birth parent(s) must be stable enough to protect the child/youth from harm and must have the ability to ensure the environmental safety and child/youth's needs are met at all times during the home visit.**
- Birth parent(s) must have emergency contact information (i.e. Foster Care Specialist's phone number, foster/adoptive parent(s) phone number, CFSS'/FPS' phone number, etc.) in case a child/youth has a crisis or emergency situation needing immediate intervention. Home visits can be cut short depending on the presenting problem(s) while a child/youth is on a home visit.
- If a child/youth is taking prescription medication(s), a home visit medication log needs to accompany the child/youth. In addition, only the exact amount of medication that needs to be dispensed should be given to the birth parent(s). The home visit medication log will be completed by the birth parent(s) and sent back with the child/youth to be given to the foster parent(s). Home visit medication logs should be turned in monthly to the assigned Foster Care Specialist along with monthly medication logs that are completed by foster parent(s) to be filed in the client's file. In the event of inclement weather impacting the length of a visit, the foster parent may send additional medication in order to ensure the youth doesn't miss a dosage.

- Medication(s) that are given to birth parent(s) or any other extended family members monitoring a home visit will only receive medication(s) in a labeled bottle.

MONITORING

Foster/adoptive parents are responsible for vigilant monitoring of every child/youth placed in their home. The foster/adoptive parents' biological children should never be given the responsibility of babysitting, chaperoning, or being put in "charge" of monitoring foster children/youth to give foster/adoptive parents a break. Vigilant monitoring, knowing whereabouts at all times, and helping to prevent disruptions in the foster home are three ways of assuring safety to children/youth in care.

Foster/adoptive parents have other means of getting a break when they need it (i.e., respite). The CFSS/FPS may allow an adolescent to be home unmonitored in rare situations. For example, if both foster/adoptive parents work and the adolescent will be home for an hour or so prior to the foster/adoptive parents returning home. These decisions are made case-specific and **must** be documented in writing by the CFSS/FPS. This can **never** be an option for any adolescent where safety concerns are present.

Procedure:

- Foster/adoptive parents are required to staff any exceptions related to vigilant monitoring with their Foster Care Specialist.
- Foster Care Specialist will then staff the unique circumstances with his/her supervisor. The Foster Care Supervisor will consult with the Foster Care Program Director if needed.
- Written documentation that outlines what is acceptable in any given situation must be provided by the adolescent's CFSS/FPS. Written documentation must be received prior to implementing any exceptions in the above purpose statement.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Due to the constant changes in the foster care system Christian Heritage consistently evaluates our recruitment methods. Christian Heritage is working on gathering specific data to target high needs areas in order to better serve the type of children that are referred. Christian Heritage serves all service areas in the state of Nebraska. Below is the detailed plan that Christian Heritage implements to accomplish our objectives.

Procedures:

- Christian Heritage currently uses the marketing campaign, "Are You Called to Be a Foster Parent?" Billboards, pamphlets, posters, and recruitment materials have been designed and are being distributed across all three service areas.

- Christian Heritage has implemented a church strategy in relation to recruitment of potential foster parents. We are developing relationships with churches to recruit families within these churches. We are asking core churches to host a TIPS-MAPP training class at their church and then surrounding churches promote the training with marketing materials we have developed.
- Christian Heritage hosts an annual recruitment event called “Foster Stories” in the Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Service Areas. These events are held at a local church and are a one-night event for people to explore becoming a foster parent. A video, bulletin inserts, posters, PowerPoint slide and radio are used to promote the event.
- Continued efforts on recruiting foster parents willing to accept teenagers, sibling strips, children with special needs, pregnant teen moms, and children from diverse cultures.
- Christian Heritage will strive to recruit foster parents in every school district.
- Christian Heritage is focused on recruiting diverse foster parents so that we become more culturally responsive to all children/youth needing foster homes (keeping MEPA and ICWA in mind).
- New recruiting events will be sought out that might draw new interest from individuals who have not yet considered providing foster care services.
- Christian Heritage foster parents are often our best recruiters. When Christian Heritage foster parents refer a potential foster family they will receive a \$200 gift card at the time the family becomes licensed. The form to refer a family is on our website at chne.org. Recruiters for the service area are responsible for tracking.
- Foster care recruitment plans are kept up-to-date and are required to be submitted to each contracting agency on a quarterly basis.
- Foster parents are invaluable when children/youth need to be placed outside their home. In order to provide continuing support to foster parents, Christian Heritage provides ongoing training opportunities, potluck dinners, an annual summer picnic and various other activities throughout the year as a means of communicating our appreciation and showing support for the work they do.

FOSTER/ADOPTIVE CARE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND REVIEWS

Foster/adoptive parents are the primary care givers of children/youth in care. Foster/adoptive parents are unique and not everyone who cares for at-risk individuals should be a foster parent. Foster/adoptive parents who are best suited for at-risk children/youth must possess many skills, traits and personal characteristics that make them effective in caring for those individuals entering out-of-home care. Although

foster/adoptive parents are not employees, but independent contractors, they must receive ongoing education and professional development in order to meet the demands of children/youth in out-of-home care today. Every foster/adoptive parent at Christian Heritage will have a foster care Professional Development Plan. This plan will serve as a means of communicating the strengths and areas to develop each foster/adoptive family has.

Procedures:

- Foster Care Specialists will develop a foster care Professional Development Plan within the first 30 days of placing a new child or youth in a foster/adoptive home.
- The foster care Professional Development Plan is completed in conjunction with input from the foster/adoptive family. Strengths and areas to develop will be communicated under concept areas. Christian Heritage has the following concept areas that apply to all foster/adoptive families:
 - Professionalism (communicates effectively, appropriately models for children/youth, works as a team, accepts and receives feedback, protects youth rights, advocates for youth appropriately, works well with consumers, etc.).
 - Relationship Building (demonstrates fairness and pleasantness, shows appropriate concern, has fun with children/youth, is affectionate, spends quality time with each child and youth, has sense of humor, is approachable, offers help, is empathetic, effective with children/youth, warm, nurturing and friendly while maintaining appropriate boundaries, etc.).
 - Teaching Skills (observes and describes behaviors accurately, teaches by suggestion, provides rationales, role plays, perceives opportunities to teach, uses praise on a regular basis, sets appropriate limits, uses response costs appropriately, monitors well, keeps appropriate tolerances, helps children/youth problem solve, offers choices, remains objective and does not personalize behaviors, etc.).
 - Family Style of Living (creates a positive home atmosphere, keeps the physical environment of the home well kept, plans healthy meals, maintains a structured environment, engages in family outings and activities, includes children/youth in the decision-making process, etc.).
 - Moral and Spiritual Development (attends church regularly, teaches children/youth to practice their faith, engages in character-building teaching, models appropriate morals and spirituality, etc.).
 - Safety (vigilant monitoring, medication dispensing and storage, adhering to reporting guidelines, appropriate discipline techniques, etc.).

- The foster care Professional Development Plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis and more often as needed, depending on the skill level and overall competencies of each foster family or foster parent. Foster Care Specialists will review the plan face-to-face during consultation.
- Supporting documentation must be updated quarterly. Both the foster/adoptive family and the Foster Care Specialist must sign and date the plan. Foster/adoptive families should be given a copy for their personal records. Foster Care Specialists must ensure that quarterly reviews are filed in the foster family or foster parent file.
- An experienced foster/adoptive family who has proven to be effective in working with at-risk children/youth, and who has a proven track record of collaborating effectively with all consumers, only needs to have the foster care Professional Development Plan reviewed and updated on a semi-annual basis. The Foster Care Supervisor must approve this and it must be documented on the plan as a semi-annual review. All other plans will communicate quarterly reviews.

HOME STUDIES AND LICENSING

The completion of a thorough home study is a crucially important requirement and a task that must be done prior to a foster/adoptive family becoming licensed. Home studies are completed by Christian Heritage Licensing Specialists. All home studies are reviewed using the home study quality assurance screening tool prior to being submitted to the Department for approval. Once the home study has been completed and reviewed, it is submitted to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for final approval.

Procedures:

- Families/individuals are screened by Christian Heritage's Recruiter and/or Foster Care Supervisors.
- A series of questions are asked and based upon responses and background results, the potential foster/adoptive parent(s) are invited to attend TIPS-MAPP Training.
- If the foster/adoptive parents pass the initial interview with the Foster Care Recruiter, a packet is given at the end of the interview. The home study profile, background check form, health report form, three reference forms (foster parents) and self-addressed envelopes, the instructions for getting their fingerprints rolled along with the fingerprint cards, and the FBI waiver forms are included in the packet. This is handed out prior to the first TIPS-MAPP training session.
- Licensing Specialists are required to obtain three positive letters of reference for every adoptive family plus a positive reference from their employer. If the

adoptive parents both work outside of the home, each of them is required to obtain a positive reference from their individual employer, and

- The Recruiter documents initial information of potential foster/adoptive parent(s) into KaleidaCare.
- Background checks are given to all adults and youth over the age of 13 to be completed and submitted to Christian Heritage. NDHHS runs all background checks which include child and adult abuse registry, sexual offender registry, criminal history check, department of motor vehicles and local law enforcement checks. The results of these are sent to Christian Heritage. If the checks come back clear, Christian Heritage's Licensing Specialist proceeds with the licensing process. The same background checks are required for families who wish to provide respite care only. The only background check that is excluded for respite families is fingerprinting per our contracts.
- All initial, transfer, and renewal foster/adoptive parent(s) background checks are done by Christian Heritage's licensing specialist. These are submitted to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.
- If discrepancies occur on a background check, licensing specialist investigates, gathers information and documents foster parent(s) explanation of discrepancy. If the discrepancy is too significant then the foster parent(s) will not be licensed. The Licensing Specialist submits foster/adoptive parent(s) clarification and documentation to NDHHS or NFC, at which time it is accepted or deferred. If it is accepted, then the Licensing Specialist can continue with the licensing process. If not, then the process is repeated or the licensing process ends and the potential foster/adoptive parent(s) are notified.
- TIPS-MAPP (30-hour training course) and Common Sense Parenting (6-hour training course) are offered to all potential foster/adoptive parents depending on the service area. This training must be completed by all foster/adoptive parent(s) if they have not already done so. Transfer families who have completed both trainings have to sign a release stating they have done so and provide documentation of the completed training. TIPS-MAPP training is required before any potential foster/adoptive parent(s) can become licensed.
- During the TIPS-MAPP training session, potential foster/adoptive parent(s) are given the following licensure forms: ***During session 2 the floor plan is handed out and explained. At Session 5, when the topic is discipline then the discipline forms are handed out along with the W-9. The application and the foster parent questionnaire are completed during the final TIPS-MAPP session. The compliance review is completed during the final walk through towards the end of the process. The State Recommends that the application be signed at the end of the training due to the stipulations that they are signing off on information and consent, some of which they will not understand until after they complete training.***

- ***“Well check” kits are provided to foster parents who have private wells.***
- The Recruitment Specialist maintains contact with the potential foster/adoptive parent(s) throughout the training sessions to encourage and ensure the timely completion and submittal of the licensure forms. However, the Licensing Specialist is ultimately responsible for ensuring that they have all the required documents completed in order to submit a complete home study.
- Once the Licensing Specialist completes all the above, he/she proceeds as follows:
 1. Licensing Specialist completes compliance review, adds any missing information to the home study and answers required NDHHS questions regarding type of youth served.
 2. The home study is typed from the information gathered from the home study profile that the foster parent(s) filled out and from the personal interviews. The home study is then submitted to Christian Heritage supervisor for approval. Home studies are assessed for quality using the home study quality assurance screening tool.
 3. For an adoption study the same home study profile is used but some extra information is gathered outside the profile:
 - An employer reference is gathered and employment is verified.
 - The licensing staff will assess how the family is adjusting to becoming one unit with the adopted child.
 - They will discuss any special needs the adopted child may have and what supports are in place if these are ongoing needs. This will include assessing whether there are any training needs for the foster family.
 - Also included is a statement making sure the adopted child will be covered under their health insurance if Medicaid is not being provided.
 4. After approval is given, the completed home study is submitted to the appropriate contracting agency; either Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.
 5. If a home study needs corrections, answers are sought and received from the foster/adoptive parent(s); necessary information is added to the home study and resubmitted.
 6. When the home study is initially approved by the NDHHS, a file is generated and the foster/adoptive parent(s) are entered into KaleidaCare as a licensed facility.

7. Once a foster/adoptive family is licensed, placement of children/youth can occur. Foster/adoptive parent(s) are communicated with as soon as Christian Heritage has been made aware that a license has been issued.
 8. Foster/adoptive parent(s) receive their paper license from Christian Heritage, after it is received.
- During the first month, foster/adoptive parents will be assigned to a Foster Care Specialist, who will assist in obtaining accurately completed licensure forms and turning them in to the licensing specialist.
 - Licensing Specialist reviews returned forms for missing information and documents. If any information is missing, the Licensing Specialist contacts potential foster parent(s) via telephone or email and communicates the needed information for completion of the home study.
 - Licensing Specialist sets up a personal interview with prospective foster parent(s) in their home after licensure information is received. An evaluation is done by the Licensing Specialist based upon observation, responses to questions, and management of their home and family. A tour of the potential foster/adoptive home is done at that time as well to assess the safety of the home and ensure that their home meets licensing requirements.
 - For relative/kinship homes the process is different. The children are usually placed on an emergency basis and the placement is approved by the State.
 - At placement, the profile is given to the foster parent by the State along with the fingerprint cards and instructions. The kinship/relative homes are given a list of agencies to choose from and are told to choose one within a week.
 - If we are chosen by the family as their supporting agency, the Foster Care Supervisor makes contact with the family as an introduction to Christian Heritage and informs them of who their Foster Care Specialist will be.
 - At the first home visit, the Foster Care Specialist may take a licensing staff along to hand out and explain the paperwork. The paperwork for the kinship/relative home is the same, the only difference in the process is that the training can be waived.
 - The goal from the State is to have the licensing packet completed 30 days from the time of placement.
 - Christian Heritage reserves the right to deny any home from being licensed or having children/youth placed in their home. Written or verbal notice will be given to the potential foster/adoptive parent(s) communicating the decision not to move forward with the licensing process. When safety concerns or lack of quality care are identified and documented, Christian Heritage reserves the

right to no longer place children/youth in a licensed foster/adoptive home as well.

- Nebraska's foster parent regulations state in 3-001.10 Maximum Number of Persons for Whom Care Can Be Provided: A foster parent may provide care for adults and children, including foster children and children related by blood, marriage or adoption, according to the following maximum placement limits. The applicable maximum placement limit for children will be reduced in an amount equal to the number of adults in the home for whom the foster parent(s) provide(s) 24 hour care and supervision. 3-001.10A Homes with Two Licensed Foster Parents: No more than six children may reside in a home with two licensed foster parents. No more than four children under age six may reside with two licensed foster parents. 3-001.10B Homes with One Licensed Foster Parent: No more than four children may reside in a home with one licensed foster parent. No more than two children under age six may reside with one licensed foster parent. 3-001.10C Exception: The Department in its discretion may allow a home to exceed the maximum placement limit when doing so is in the best interest of each child in the home. The Council on Accreditation (COA) states the best practice is to care for no more than five (5) children/youth at any time and this number includes biological or adopted children. Foster Care Specialists must provide written documentation on how they plan to provide extra support for any foster family caring for more than five (5) children/youth. We are committed to providing quality services and staying within best practice guidelines. Our professional foster parent homes will typically have more than five (5) children/youth being cared for, including biological, adopted or guardianship situations. Written documentation that outlines additional support will be kept in the foster parent file.

RESPITE CARE

Due to the nature and stress of foster/adoptive parenting, times of respite are needed to help caregivers rejuvenate and remain attuned to the children/youth placed in their care. Christian Heritage encourages foster/adoptive parents to utilize respite as needed to help promote safety, stability and well-being. Foster/adoptive parents need to take care of themselves so they can maintain the ability to work effectively with at-risk children/youth.

Procedures:

Respite Care for a Child/Youth Placed in a Christian Heritage Home:

- Respite is performed by other licensed foster/adoptive families or friends and family members who have submitted to and passed appropriate background checks. The background check covers the following areas: child and adult abuse registry, sexual offender registry, department of motor vehicles and local law enforcement checks. An individual must successfully pass these check points in order to provide respite services. Fingerprinting is the only check that is not required for providing respite. Friends and family members who provide

respite do not need to be licensed as long as they are known to the child. Individuals who are not known to the child must be licensed foster parents in the state of Nebraska.

- Payment for respite is arranged by the foster/adoptive family requesting respite. There is no required payment amount for respite, but Christian Heritage suggests that foster/adoptive families pay the child's daily rate per day they are in respite. Foster/adoptive families may make arrangements with the respite provider that involve no payment (ie-a family member is providing the respite). That is acceptable as long as both parties are in agreement. Christian Heritage is not responsible for any unpaid respite.
- The respite arrangements are made entirely through the foster/adoptive family and respite provider. Foster Care Specialists may assist foster/adoptive families with locating respite when given adequate notice (at least one week prior to the desired respite). However, the responsibility for locating the needed respite falls solely upon the foster/adoptive family who needs the respite.
- Medications are administered by respite providers to the child/youth as prescribed by the primary care physician or psychiatrist. The proper dosage, time and route are ensured by the foster/adoptive parents and documented on the approved medication log.
- Foster parents should fill out and provide to the respite provider the Respite Information Form, which provides all necessary information on the youth.
- Any time respite is arranged, the Foster Care Specialist **MUST** be notified in advance so that the Foster Care Specialist can notify the CFSS or FPS of the child's whereabouts during the time of respite.

Respite Care for a Child or Youth Placed in an Outside Agency Home:

- Christian Heritage can also provide respite care for children/youth at the request of another agency. A phone call or email is sent to Christian Heritage's foster care supervisor asking for respite services. Christian Heritage approves the respite care and locates a licensed foster/adoptive home that is suitable. Transportation, visitation and other necessary appointments that occur during the respite time are communicated and coordinated between the foster/adoptive parent(s) and contracting agency's representative. Christian Heritage assists whenever necessary; however, most responsibility lies with the child/youth's assigned agency. A Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist is on call to support the child/youth as needed. Foster Care Specialists are assigned to the foster/adoptive home being utilized for respite based on the foster/adoptive families' ability to provide respite and location of the foster home. The Foster Care Supervisor makes the final decision, but in collaboration with the Foster Care Specialist's input. Respite care **cannot exceed 10 days** unless prior approval is given by DHHS. Financial reimbursement is given to

both Christian Heritage and the foster/adoptive parent(s) for services rendered.

- Medications are administered by foster/adoptive parent(s) to the child/youth as prescribed by the primary care physician or psychiatrist. The proper dosage, time and route are ensured by the foster/adoptive parents and documented on the approved medication log.

Health and Safety during Respite:

- Christian Heritage utilizes any and all licensed and approved respite providers. Respite services are based upon the capacity of the home to care for a certain number of children/youth. Christian Heritage does not allow a child/youth to reside in a foster/adoptive home that is at their licensed capacity. Christian Heritage attempts to utilize respite services for a child/youth based primarily upon two criteria: the foster/adoptive parent(s) are suitable to provide care and meet the needs of the child/youth. If special needs arise, then foster/adoptive parent(s) are found that are suitable to meet those special needs. Secondly, foster/adoptive parent(s) must ensure that the child/youth has a bedroom to sleep in and must honor their right to privacy. Supervision is provided by Christian Heritage foster/adoptive parent(s) for the duration of the respite period. Any behaviors that are deemed inappropriate, harmful or concerning are reported immediately to the Christian Heritage's Foster Care Specialist assigned to the family providing services.
- Communication ensues between the Foster Care Specialist and child/youth's children and family services specialist. Documentation is performed by Christian Heritage's Foster Care Specialist and made available at the request of the child/youth's children and family services specialist. Prior to or upon arrival, a foster/adoptive parent is given medication(s) and other pertinent information for each child/youth. When an accident or medical emergency occurs, foster/adoptive parent(s) notify their assigned Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist. Communication ensues about the proper steps to take when seeking medical care. The foster care agency supports foster/adoptive parent(s) in any capacity and acts as a liaison with the child/youth's supporting agency. The Foster Care Specialist communicates with the child/youth's children and family services specialist regarding the necessity for medical care. Foster/adoptive parent(s) are responsible for transporting a child/youth to receive medical care when necessary.

TRANSPORTATION AND SUPERVISION OF PARENTING TIME VISITS

Transportation is a necessary need that all foster children/youth have while in care. Ensuring safety while providing transportation and supervising parenting time visits is paramount.

Procedures:

- The foster/adoptive parent(s) shall provide all daily or weekly transportation within a 25-mile radius of their home. Transportation needs are to be addressed prior to or at the time of placement and must be considered when determining a placement to be appropriate. This will include transportation to activities, community services, therapy visits, doctor appointments, court hearings and a child/youth's home school district. Transportation outside of the 25-mile radius can be reimbursed by the contracting agency if so stated in the subcontract agreement.
- The Foster Care Specialist may assist with transportation as needed or in emergencies. This could include transporting children/youth to family visits as outlined in the NDHHS parenting time plan. Transportation costs beyond the 25-mile radius are the responsibility of contracting agencies depending on the subcontract agreement.
- Christian Heritage staff should not be expected to provide transportation for any child/youth on a daily or weekly basis for any reason other than in an emergency situation or without Foster Care Supervisor or Program Director approval.
- For children/youth who have supervised visitation needs, these will be addressed in the parenting time plans and transportation will generally not be provided by the foster parent(s) unless mutually agreed upon and documented in the parenting time plan established at the onset of services or anytime during the provision of services.
- Depending on the parenting time plan that is established, foster/adoptive parent(s) may provide supervision and transportation to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/youth during visits with birth parents or other relatives. All supervised parenting time visits are arranged and completed in collaboration with the birth parents, child/youth (as age appropriate), Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS), Foster Care Specialist, and all other pertinent family team members as appropriate. The Foster Care Specialist may end up supervising parenting time visits when the foster/adoptive parent(s) are unable to do so. Prior to or at the time of placement a discussion of the child/youth's visitation needs should occur. Based on the child/youth's permanency objective, the FPS or CFSS may request parenting time visits at any time during the provision of care.
- Regardless of who is responsible for supervising parenting time visits, it is crucial to follow the parenting time plan and not cancel visits for any reason. Doing so can lead to disciplinary action. In addition, visits are to be supervised at all times unless semi-supervised visits have been pre-approved by the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS). The primary goals of parenting time visits are to allow parents to interact with their child/youth and spend quality time together connecting and bonding. Ensuring the child/youth's safety and well-being is also a responsibility of the person

supervising parenting time visits, as well as making sure appropriate topics of conversation occur, family members are maintaining appropriate roles, and that the visits are productive and positive.

- Foster/adoptive parent(s), Foster Care Specialists or other designated and approved staff will address any and all inappropriate behaviors during the visit and communicate to the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist(CFSS) any interventions used or needed.
- Best practice is to assign one or two individuals to each child/youth receiving parenting time visits to increase stability, provide consistency and build continuity. However, due to scheduling conflicts, this may not always be possible. Any changes in the parenting time plan must be communicated to the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) and Foster Care Supervisor.
- Foster/adoptive parent(s), Foster Care Specialists, or other designated and approved staff are encouraged to call the birth parent or relative being visited on the day of the visit to confirm the time and location of the visit. If previous plans have already been made, the responsibility rests with the birth parent or relative being visited. This will help avoid missed visits. If there is a “no show,” or cancellation by the birth parents/relatives being visited, this needs to be reported immediately to the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) and Foster Care Supervisor, whomever can be contacted first.
- Building and maintaining relationships, effective communication, and professionalism are critical in the delivery of parenting time visits.
- Behaviors that are examples of professionalism include but are not limited to: being attentive and keeping accurate documentation during parenting time visits; using appropriate communication skills; being pleasant, considerate, and sincere; dressing appropriately in accordance with Christian Heritage standards; being clear and specific, and giving realistic rationales when behavioral interventions are needed.
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance with regard to our clients. Cases are not to be discussed except with the appropriate personnel who are involved with the child/youth, such as the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS), Child and Family Services Specialist(CFSS), and the foster/adoptive parent(s) depending on who is monitoring the visits; especially when there is relevant information as to a child/youth’s potential behavior in the foster home if the foster/adoptive parent(s) were not monitoring the visit. Discussions about case issues are not appropriate when communicating with biological parents or relatives of the case. For example: discussions about the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist’s (CFSS) decisions, issues involving placements, or reimbursement issues.

- If the circumstances of the visit impact the child/youth's mood, behavior, or safety, the person monitoring the visit will report this verbally to the appropriate team members while maintaining confidentiality with the biological family. Such communication will help foster/adoptive parent(s) and Foster Care Specialist to prepare to work with the child/youth.
- All noteworthy incidents or circumstances that place a child/youth in a potentially harmful or neglectful situation will be reported immediately to the Family Permanency Specialist (NFC) or Child and Family Permanency Specialist (CFSS) and Foster Care Supervisor.

PARENTING TIME STAFF TRAINING

The ability to relate to the children/youth and birth families in an open, caring and sensitive way is perhaps the single most important contribution we make to birth parents. While monitoring visits, foster/adoptive parents and/or Foster Care Specialists have an opportunity to help children/youth and families that have been separated or are in crisis learn more constructive and adaptive ways to function as a family.

Procedures:

- Foster/adoptive parent(s) and Foster Care Specialists are trained in Common Sense Parenting, which is a promising practice model for providing appropriate discipline for children/youth. Principles learned in Common Sense Parenting training will be incorporated during monitoring visits between a child/youth and his/her birth parents or relatives.
- Foster/adoptive parent(s) and Foster Care Specialists will receive training on their roles during parenting time visits.

CAR SEATS AND VEHICLE SAFETY

- Foster/adoptive families and Foster Care Specialists as well as any other staff member providing transportation must understand and know how to install and use car seats properly. Additionally, they must adhere to Nebraska State Laws and Regulations.
- Nebraska State law requires that any child up to age 6 must be in a car seat regardless of his/her height or weight. To ride in the front seat of a vehicle without a passenger airbag, a child must be six years old and 65 pounds or more, and properly restrained. Should the vehicle being driven have a passenger airbag children riding in the front seat must be 13 years old and over 80 pounds.
- Only car seats that are not older than six years and have not been recalled can be used to transport children.

- All occupants of a vehicle being driven by a Christian Heritage staff member or foster/adoptive parent(s) must be properly restrained. Talking on a cell phone or texting while the vehicle is moving is prohibited if children/youth are in a Christian Heritage vehicle. Smoking is not permitted while children/youth are in the vehicle. Birth parent(s) should arrange their own transportation and Christian Heritage will not transport birth parents unless the Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) and the Christian Heritage Foster Care Supervisor gives approval.

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE AND CARE

From time to time Christian Heritage may have company vehicles that can be checked out for use during parenting time visits or transportation. The sign out sheet and vehicle keys are located at the reception desk (Lincoln office only). If the vehicle is in need of gas, the driver should fill it, save the receipt, and attach it to the monthly expense report. Check the oil in the vehicle before you drive. Be sure to fill out the mileage log book. If you notice that the vehicle needs an oil change, or is not running properly, be sure to inform the Foster Care Supervisor or Foster Care Program Director. Please be responsible to clean out any trash inside the vehicle.

Procedures:

- The use of Christian Heritage (CH) vehicles is a privilege available to CH staff for work-related purposes. When a vehicle is available, CH employees are encouraged to use it for their transportation needs. But when a vehicle is unavailable, CH employees should use their personal vehicles and submit their mileage to be reimbursed.
- Employees should reserve the vehicle using the vehicle schedule calendar section of the notebook maintained at the front desk (Lincoln office only). Scheduling will be on a first-come (or first-reserved), first-served basis. However, there may be instances where the nature of a vehicle need (i.e., length of trip, type of use) overrides a prior request for its use. The Omaha and Kearney offices do not typically experience problems with reserving Christian Heritage vehicles due to fewer employees at each office.
- The keys are kept in the lock-box behind the front desk (Lincoln office only), and as much as possible, the administrative assistant will access the keys for staff who need them. Assuming the schedule allows, arrangements can be made to check out a key ahead of time.
- When scheduled employees pick up the keys, they will complete all sign-out information. When they return the keys, they will sign them back in, complete

all information for sign-in. If a key is missing, the last person who checked the key out will be held responsible.

- If the fuel gauge indicates a quarter of a tank or less, the person driving the vehicle should fill it up. If gas is low at the next checkout, the last person will be held responsible.
- If the vehicle needs to be washed during your time of use, please take the time to do that and keep your wash receipt so that you can be reimbursed.
- If the inside of the vehicle gets messy during your use, please clean it out, including vacuuming. Roc's (84th and Old Cheney, Lincoln only) has free vacuuming. If the next user complains about the interior condition, the person who previously signed out the vehicle will be held responsible.

RISK REDUCTION

Safety is of utmost importance for the children/youth placed with Christian Heritage. Because of that, we document any and all incidents, accidents and grievance situations.

Procedures:

- The Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist will provide 24-hour support to the foster/adoptive parent(s) to which they are assigned. A foster/adoptive parent's first call in any accident situation, other than a life-threatening crisis call to 911, should be to their Foster Care Specialist.
- Ongoing assessment of medical and mental health needs of the child/youth will occur regularly by the Foster Care Specialist in conjunction with the foster/adoptive parent and be documented in KaleidaCare (health logs, service plans, etc.).
- Whenever an incident occurs, depending on the level of incident, it will either be treated as an internal documented incident, or an external documented incident. See Reporting Guidelines for specific documentation procedures. Incidents where there is a question of abuse or neglect will be reported to Child Protective Services at 1(800) 652-1999.
- Foster/adoptive parents and foster care employees are required to go through pre-service TIPS-MAPP and Common Sense Parenting. As part of this training, foster/adoptive parents learn about the importance of having regular fire drills and escape plans in the event of a fire. Also, foster/adoptive parents learn they should designate a place in the house for tornado warnings and provide this information to all children/youth living with them.

- Foster/adoptive parents are prohibited from using safety holds or manual guidance except under emergency conditions where there is a clear and imminent threat to the physical safety and well-being of the child/youth, or others. Any hold or manual guidance situation must be immediately reported to the Foster Care Specialist, who in turn will report this information to the Foster Care Supervisor. These types of incidents are required to be reported and end up going to the top on the same day the incident is reported (Foster Care Program Director and CEO).
- When Christian Heritage receives a grievance report, the Foster Care Director and/or his/her designee will complete an investigation. He or she may choose to enlist assistance from employees of the ministry and/or outside legal, accounting or other advisors, as appropriate. Once the investigation has been completed, the Executive Council will review the findings.

FOSTER CARE SPECIALIST, LICENSING SPECIALIST AND SUPERVISOR QUALIFICATIONS

Christian Heritage personnel are committed to helping ensure the safety, stability, well-being and permanency of every child/youth entrusted to our care. Foster Care Specialists and Foster Care Supervisors shall have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services or closely related field, or a Bachelor's degree in a related field with experience delivering foster care related services. For Foster Care Specialists, an exception may be requested to approve a combination of education and experience to substitute for a Bachelor's Degree. This request will be submitted to the appropriate contracting agency based on contract requirements.

Minimum qualifications required for a Licensing Specialists that completes foster/adoptive home studies are:

- A current resume showing education and experience. The individual is required to hold a bachelor's degree or higher in a human services field OR at minimum must have a high school diploma or GED and five (5) years of full-time equivalent experience in child welfare programming. This includes, but is not limited to: interviewing, assessment, making professional determinations, and writing reports or narratives, and
- Clear the following background checks for any employee, including previous names used:
 - The Nebraska Child Protective Services Registry, and
 - The Nebraska Adult Protective Services Registry, and
 - The Nebraska State Patrol Sexual Offender Registry, and
 - Department of Motor vehicle background check, and
 - Criminal History Background Check

FOSTER CARE SPECIALIST CASELOADS

Christian Heritage is committed to the safety, stability, permanency and well-being of each child/youth placed in Christian Heritage care. In order to ensure safe, effective and quality care, Foster Care Specialists will not be allowed to carry too large of a caseload. Foster Care Specialists will generally carry an average caseload of 18 children/youth. However, the number of children/youth on each caseload is contingent on the level of care. For example, if a Foster Care Specialist has a caseload of all Enhanced level children/youth, their caseload should not exceed 16. Additionally, if a Foster Care Specialist has a caseload of all Intensive level children/youth, their caseload should not exceed 10. However, if a Foster Care Specialist has a caseload of all Essential level children/youth, they should be able to safely carry a caseload of up to 25. Since Foster Care Specialists' caseloads are mixed, it is hard to envision a pure caseload existing at a certain level. Other variables that will go into Foster Care Specialist caseload decisions include but are not limited to: skills, competencies, location of foster homes, difficult children/youth situations on current caseload, and other special circumstances. These are guidelines and not requirements. Ongoing assessment of caseload size and special circumstances needs to occur on a weekly basis.

Another reason Christian Heritage is committed to maintaining reasonable caseloads is so that Foster Care Specialists have time to build relationships while conducting home visits and providing consultation. Christian Heritage cares about their employees and understands the demands put on them by being on call 24/7, responding to crisis situations, and supporting foster/adoptive families who in many cases are in need of a lot of support.

Christian Heritage hopes that by maintaining reasonable caseloads for Foster Care Specialists, employee retention will remain high and staff morale will remain positive and upbeat.

FOSTER CARE SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

Foster Care Supervisors play a critical role to the overall quality and effectiveness of the Foster Care Program. The support and consultation that is provided to Foster Care Specialists helps to ensure a healthy work environment where the morale of staff is positive. Foster Care Supervisors wear many hats and must possess the skills and competencies to perform the essential functions of their jobs well.

Procedures:

- Foster Care Supervisors will conduct weekly consultations with all new Foster Care Specialists for the first six months of employment. Depending on the level of competencies and skills reached at six months, Foster Care Supervisors can choose to meet on a biweekly (twice monthly) basis. Just because a Foster Care Specialist reaches the six-month mark does not automatically mean that meeting twice a month is sufficient. Foster Care Supervisors are empowered to continue meeting on a weekly basis, three times per month or twice monthly,

depending on the level of support and supervision the Foster Care Specialist's needs. However, the minimum requirement on an ongoing basis, regardless of skill level and overall competencies, is once monthly. This decision is made at the Foster Care Supervisor's discretion.

- Foster Care Supervisors will document consultations in the monthly progress reports and contact notes as needed. The Foster Care Supervisor and Foster Care Specialist will both sign a copy. Foster Care Supervisors should keep a binder for each Foster Care Specialist showing documentation that consultations are occurring at minimum intervals.
- Foster Care Supervisors are required to observe a minimum of one face-to-face consultation between the Foster Care Specialist and a foster family/parent quarterly (not one per each foster family/parent). This observation will give insight into the overall quality and effectiveness of the consultation and support Foster Care Specialists are providing. Since foster parents are the primary change agents, it will be important to assess that foster parents are being empowered and equipped with the direction they need to be successful in their roles as foster parents. Direct observation is also an excellent way to reinforce staff for the quality work they do, as well as give insight into areas that continue to need improvement.

FOSTER CARE SPECIALIST RESPONSIBILITIES

Foster Care Specialists play a vital role in ensuring the safety, permanency, stability, and well-being of every child/youth entrusted to the care of Christian Heritage. Foster Care Specialists must possess the unique abilities to provide support to foster/adoptive parents, use good judgment, remain objective, manage foster/adoptive parents with tact and honesty, and appropriately advocate for the individual needs of each child/youth placed outside of their own home. Foster Care Specialists need to demonstrate the ability to build healthy relationships with foster/adoptive parent(s), but never get so close that they lose their ability to think objectively and to advocate what is in the best interest of children/youth. They must possess the ability to work effectively with numerous consumers who often have set agendas. Remaining objective, unbiased, and the utmost professional at all times is expected by Christian Heritage personnel.

Procedures:

- Foster Care Specialists will ensure that each foster/adoptive family receives a copy of the initial placement guidelines. This will set the foster/adoptive parent(s) and the child/youth up for more success.
- Foster Care Specialists will ensure that each birth parent receives a copy of the Birth Parent Information Manual. This information will orient biological families to Christian Heritage's Foster Care Program.

- Youth files contain information regarding background, family history, case reports and medical and therapeutic details. Due to the sensitivity of this information, youth files must never leave the office in which they are stored without Foster Care Supervisor approval. Youth files must be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office. In the event a youth file needs to leave the office the file should be placed in the trunk or locked briefcase for safekeeping while being transported so it will not be seen by a youth or other adult.
- Foster Care Specialists and Foster Care Supervisors are responsible for being knowledgeable about the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). This is critical in appropriately advocating for Indian children/youth. Collaboration with the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) as well as the Family Permanency Specialist (NFC) will help to ensure that all Indian children/youth have access to all provisions and standards of ICWA. This includes but is not limited to: any special considerations; identification of Indian children/youth; determination of jurisdiction; collaboration and notice with the child/youth's tribe; placement preferences to support the child/youth's connection to their native culture and heritage; efforts to achieve permanency, etc.
- Foster Care Specialists need to know and adhere to the essential functions of their jobs as evidenced by reading and signing a copy of the Foster Care Specialist job description.
- As determined by subcontract requirements, Foster Care Specialists will spend time with individual children/youth and foster/adoptive families to model and teach them how to grow physically, socially, intellectually and spiritually, as well as to ensure progress towards individual goals.
- Foster Care Specialists provide direct supervision to foster/adoptive parent(s) and children/youth residing in foster homes and address areas of concern appropriately with both the children/youth and foster/adoptive parent(s).
- They will provide praise, encouragement, and direction to each foster/adoptive family and child/youth in the home to develop a sense of accountability and confidence.
- They will continually monitor safety (i.e., medication dispensing, lethality issues, intakes, emergency protocols such as fire, tornado, etc.).
- Foster Care Specialists are responsible for maintaining regular contact with all consumers (i.e., foster/adoptive parent(s), biological parent(s), Guardians ad litem, Child and Family Permanency Specialist, Family Permanency Specialist (NFC), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), therapists, counselors, parents, school personnel, etc.).
- They will ensure that all children/youth receive a medical screening by a qualified medical practitioner within 72 hours of entry into care.

Foster/adoptive parent(s) need to be held accountable to ensure that this occurs.

- They will ensure that foster/adoptive parent(s) set up needed appointments for each child/youth they care for within the first seven days (dental, eye, therapy, etc.) and document the annual physical and semiannual dental exams in the service plans and/or progress reports. Hard copies of all medical and semiannual dental appointments are to be placed in the child/youth's file.
- Foster Care Specialists develop an Interim Service Plan immediately upon the admission of each child/youth into a foster/adoptive home (within 72 hours).
- Foster Care Specialists create and implement a Comprehensive Service Plan within 30 days of placement based on the Case Plan that is completed by the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) and provide service plan reviews to the appropriate personnel (contract specific) by the 10th of each month (NFC) or 15th of each month (NDHHS).
- Foster Care Specialists attend court hearings with children/youth when appropriate, or when foster/adoptive parent(s) cannot be present.
- They are responsible for completing a Discharge Report within 14 days of a child/youth's departure.
- They assist the Foster Care Supervisor and/or Program Director with compilation of data and outcomes for statistical records and reporting.
- When foster/adoptive parent(s) are unavailable, Foster Care Specialists assist in transportation to and from school, appointments, therapeutic visits, and all other pertinent meetings within a 25-mile radius. This is only in an emergency situation or when all other forms of transportation are unavailable.
- Foster Care Specialists assist with intake and placement of foster/adoptive children/youth.
- They assist with coordinating respite care services and reimbursement for foster/adoptive parent(s) that provide respite services.
- They meet with the Foster Care Supervisor on a scheduled basis for consultation.
- They report significant incidents directly to the Foster Care Supervisor immediately (i.e., level of care changes, self-harm statements, sexual harassment, bullying, drug use, runaway behavior, physical aggression, verbal aggression, self-mutilation, refusing medications, etc.). They document incidents properly and thoroughly within a 24-hour period. Based on supervisor recommendations and contractual reporting guidelines, they communicate this information immediately. Incidents are reported to the Family Permanency

Specialist (NFC) who in turn is responsible for notifying the CFOM's (NFC) or the Child and Family Services Specialist (DHHS).

- Foster Care Specialists are responsible for conducting random home inspections and evaluations in order to ensure the safety, stability and well-being of each child/youth placed with Christian Heritage.
- The information above is not an all inclusive list of the roles and responsibilities of Foster Care Specialists; however, the information does reflect some of the essential functions of the job.

LEVEL OF SUPPORT

Due to the potential for crisis situations to occur in the foster care program, a Foster Care Specialist and Foster Care Supervisor is available on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis. Each Christian Heritage office has a procedure for after-hours on call support, which will be communicated at the time of placement. The first call a foster/adoptive family makes in any situation, other than a life-threatening crisis call to 911, should be to their Foster Care Specialist. All Foster Care Specialists are to be available via cell phone. Foster/adoptive parent(s) should ensure they have the correct contact information for their assigned Foster Care Specialist and for the on-call phone. The Foster Care Specialist will return phone calls in a timely fashion.

All foster/adoptive parents will maintain a phone sheet with all the pertinent phone numbers of the support workers in their area. Foster Care Specialists will educate foster/adoptive parent(s) about whom to contact and when. In the event a Foster Care Specialist or Supervisor knows he/she is going to be unavailable for an extended period of time, he/she needs to line up alternative coverage for their families and children/youth.

The Foster Care Specialists are required to meet face-to-face with children/youth a minimum number of times monthly to ensure their safety and demonstrate excellent support for the foster/adoptive parents. Although there are minimum contract requirements related face-to-face visits with children/youth, this should not guide our practice. Meaning, we must adhere to minimum requirements based on level of care and needs, but minimums may not be sufficient in providing the level of direct support and quality of care expectations we strive for daily. Children/youth and foster/adoptive parents will receive as much support and face-to-face contact as needed to ensure placement stability and quality care for everyone involved. Foster Care Specialists will arrive on time or will call to communicate the delay, or to reschedule. For short-term emergency placements, face-to-face contact with the child/youth is weekly. Every child/youth in our care must be seen at least one time each month even though the contract does not require this level of supervision. All face-to-face visits with children/youth and foster parents must be documented in monthly progress reports and/or in the foster family contact notes as appropriate.

The purpose of these meetings is to assess the progress children/youth are making on their goals, identify any problems or issues the child/youth or foster/adoptive parents

need assistance in dealing with, discuss discharge planning, address visitation or transportation issues, review medical or therapy appointments, problem solve, and encourage the foster/adoptive parents and foster children. All this information should be entered into the monthly progress reports.

TRAINING

Christian Heritage is committed to providing to all personnel and foster/adoptive parent(s) the training needed to be successful in working with at-risk children/youth. Receiving behavior support and management training helps to ensure a safe working environment. Gaining the competencies to work effectively with children/youth also helps to reduce crisis situations. In addition, children/youth in care often display noncompliant and sometimes out-of-control behaviors. All personnel and foster/adoptive parent(s) must be equipped to deal effectively with and manage noncompliant and out-of-control behaviors without ever using techniques that escalate situations. Refer to Behavior Management section under “Services for Children and Youth.”

Foster/adoptive parent(s) must receive the 30-hour TIPS-MAPP pre-service training prior to being licensed. The curriculum must be delivered as it is written. Additional information may supplement the training curriculum, but may not replace it. Christian Heritage also uses Common Sense Parenting as a supplement to TIPS-MAPP training. Foster/adoptive parent(s) must have an additional 24 hours (12 hours per year) of ongoing training during their two-year licensing period.

All Christian Heritage foster care staff are required to complete 24 hours of pre-service training. Additionally, all staff must obtain 24 hours of ongoing training per year. The Foster Care Licensing & Training Supervisor oversees training requirements and assists in ensuring that all foster/adoptive parent(s) and personnel are current on training and documentation, and that tracking is current to certify training is completed. The trainer(s) will meet with staff or foster/adoptive parent(s) individually or schedule group training to ensure that training standards are met.

The Foster Care Director, Foster Care Supervisor and CEO are responsible for using data to assess behavior trends that may be occurring in particular foster homes or foster/adoptive homes being supported by particular Foster Care Specialist. Behaviors such as, but not limited to: running away, substance use, physical aggression, verbal aggression, medication issues, poor school performance, etc., will be assessed and evaluated to see if there are antecedents to the spikes in these concerns. In order to equip and help children/youth become successful, completing functional assessments of behavior concerns are critical. Functional assessments help identify what things might be driving behavior concerns in children/youth. In addition, functional assessments help identify strategies and interventions to help children/youth become more successful. Data will be used to educate staff and help Christian Heritage as an organization make the changes needed to be most effective in helping children/youth achieve their goals and become productive, law-abiding citizens.

Christian Heritage provides training in the following areas in order to ensure that foster/adoptive parent(s) and personnel are competent and able to perform the essential functions of their jobs. This list is not necessarily exhaustive.

Foster/Adoptive Care Services Training

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Employee Orientation • TIPS-MAPP Training • Attachment • Common Sense Parenting • Professionalism • Youth Rights • Cultural Diversity • Principles of Behavior • Observing and Describing • Rationales • Suicide/Lethality • Preventative Teaching • Modeling Family Life • Building Character and Values • Effective Praise • Teaching Self-Control • Defensive/Distracted Driving • Domestic Violence Awareness • RPPS Training • NYTD Training • Faith Integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying Calm • Teaching by Suggestion • Active Listening • Exploration • Medication Training • Confrontation • Tolerances • Building Healthy Relationships • CPR/First Aid • Crisis Teaching • Service Plans and Reviews • Creating a Safe Environment • MEPA (Multi Ethnic Placement Act) • ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) • NDHHS Overview • Testifying in Court • Distracted Driving |
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GRIEVANCE ISSUES

Should a staff member, foster parent, client or community stakeholder have an issue or problem that needs to be addressed, he or she has a right to file a grievance.

Procedures:

- Refer to the Grievance Procedures/Clients and Stakeholders document when a grievance is necessary.
- Take each issue to the person to whom the problem is directly related. If the issue is unresolved at that level, seek the next level of authority. If the issue is too uncomfortable to address to the individual in question, seek the next level of authority.
- Should a grievance be with the NDHHS Child and Family Services Specialist, Family Permanency Specialist (NFC), supervisor or other person, appropriate

channels of feedback are expected to be used. All concerns should first be addressed to the Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist who can then determine the appropriate action to be taken.

- Letters, e-mails and phone calls expressing frustration or making accusations of any nature to a CFSS/FPS or other state worker are not appropriate unless Christian Heritage has given consent for such action to be taken. These kinds of retaliatory actions may cause damage to children/youth in placement and will not be tolerated. Immediate removal of children/youth in placement and closing of a foster/adoptive home are possible consequences of this type of behavior. Undoubtedly, frustrations will arise. However, there are appropriate ways to handle these circumstances and the most positive outcomes will occur when the team of folks surrounding children/youth work together.

INVESTIGATIONS, ALLEGATIONS OR INTAKES

(CPS or Internal)

At some point in time most foster/adoptive families will have accusations made against them. Due to the intense and personal nature of foster care, this is to be expected. Just because an allegation is made does not mean that a foster/adoptive parent's home is in jeopardy. Accusations are made for a variety of reasons, some which are not reasonable. Foster/adoptive parents should remain calm and objective. If foster/adoptive parents are aware an accusation has been made against them, they should report this situation to the Christian Heritage Foster Care Specialist immediately.

When a foster/adoptive family has an accusation made against them, Christian Heritage will be notified. This will typically come from a designee from the contracting agency who learns of the situation from the contracting agency's contract monitor. Christian Heritage may also learn of this directly from the child/youth's Family Permanency Specialist (NFC) or Child and Family Services Specialist (DHHS). Investigations fall into one of two categories: Child Protective Services (CPS) or internal agency issues. Should the investigation be deemed appropriate for CPS, the Foster Care Specialist and agency staff can have contact with the foster/adoptive parent(s), but are not to discuss the situation, allegations, or investigation. Calls can be made to the Family Permanency Specialist (NFC) or Child and Family Services Specialist (DHHS) regarding progress of the investigation, but not the content. If the investigation is given back to Christian Heritage for an internally resolved issue, the following is the protocol:

1. Ensure that the Foster Care Supervisor and Foster Care Director are aware of the allegations and situation.
2. Foster Care Supervisor will go into the foster home and conduct an investigation of all involved parties. The Foster Care Director may be involved in the investigation depending on the situation that needs to be investigated and the skill level of the Foster Care Supervisor.

3. Foster Care Supervisor will write up the findings and assemble a written action plan.
4. Report and action plan will be given to Christian Heritage Foster Care Director and associated Foster Care Specialist and then sent to the contracting agency's Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) or Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS). As necessary, a copy may be sent to the CFSS/FPS involved.
5. A follow-up home visit may also be necessary, with a write-up.

When allegations or concerns arise, or the foster family gives 14-day notice on their placement, the foster home will be placed on "hold" status to investigate the allegations or review why the disruption occurred. This means that no additional foster children/youth can be placed in the home until the specific concerns are alleviated. These concerns may come from the CFSS, FPS, or other state personnel and usually action must be taken in order to remove the foster/adoptive home from "hold" status. Foster/adoptive parents should be aware of when and why their home has been placed on "hold" status. Should the foster/adoptive home be required to complete specific actions in order to be removed from "hold" status, cooperation is essential for this process to occur quickly and efficiently. Any questions should be directed to the Foster Care Specialist or Supervisor.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

As foster care staff, it is essential to know and adhere to an appropriate understanding of chain of command. As a child-placing agency, foster care staff are responsible for the care of children/youth entrusted to Christian Heritage's care. The chain of command is as follows:

Position	Description of Role or Responsibility
Foster/adoptive parents	Direct substitute caretaker of children/youth
Foster Care Specialist	Direct support to foster/adoptive parent(s) and monitoring progress of each child/youth in care
Biological parent(s)	Encouraged to be actively involved in their child/youth's care, depending on permanency
Family Permanency Specialist (FPS)	Coordinates care for each client on their caseload. Works as the primary liaison between service providers and the NDHHS Child and Family Outcome Monitor (CFOM).
Child and Family Outcome Monitor (NFC) Child and Family Services Specialist(NDHHS)	Placement decisions, legal guardian of child/youth
CFOM and CFSS Supervisor	Crisis help, placement decisions, manages Family Permanency Specialist and the Child and Family Services Specialist
Foster Care Supervisor	Placement of youth, crisis help, support of Foster Care Specialists, training
Foster Care Director	Program decisions, placement decision support, staff administration, management and support, training

Additional Staff	Description of Role or Responsibility
Licensing Specialist	Completes home studies, licensing, assists with billing
Recruiting Specialist	Recruitment and screening of new foster/adoptive parents and foster/adoptive parent or staff training as needed

Always seek to resolve any issues at the least restrictive level. Discuss issues that need to be settled personally. Should resolution not occur at the base level, take the concern to the next level. Foster/adoptive parents should always call the Foster Care Specialist first.



Foster and Adoptive Care Program Procedure Manual Acknowledgement Form

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of, read and understood the Christian Heritage Foster and Adoptive Care Program Procedures Manual, revised on April 17, 2017 which provides guidelines on the procedures and programs affecting my affiliation with this organization. I understand that Christian Heritage can, at its sole discretion, modify, eliminate, revise, or deviate from the guidelines and information in this manual as circumstances or situations warrant, and I will be informed of such.

I also understand that any changes made by Christian Heritage Foster Care with respect to its procedures or programs can supersede, modify, or eliminate any of the procedures or programs outlined in this manual. I accept responsibility for familiarizing myself with the information in this manual and will seek verification or clarification of its terms or guidance when necessary.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that this manual is neither a contract of association nor a legal document and nothing in the manual creates an express or implied contract of employment/association. I further understand that employees are hired at-will and that at-will relationship may not be modified by any oral or implied agreement. I also understand that foster/adoptive parents are independent contractors of Christian Heritage and are not considered employees. I understand that I should consult the Christian Heritage Foster Care Supervisor should I have any questions about this manual.

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____