

Chronological List of Handouts

Handouts

1. Meeting 1 Agenda
2. Partnership Building and Teamwork in Foster Care
3. Criteria for Mutual Selection: Twelve Skills for Successful Fostering and Adopting
4. Description of the GPSII/MAPP Program Meetings and Steps
5. Strengths/Needs Assessment
6. Robert Case Study
7. Partnership Development Plan
8. A Brief Summary of Child Welfare Laws Important to Foster and Adoptive Parents
9. Important Definitions for Foster and Adoptive Parents
10. Strengths/Needs and Permanency for Children
11. Roles and Responsibilities of Foster Parents
12. Resource Guide for Foster, Adoptive and Foster/Adoptive Parents*

Meeting 1: Welcome to the GPSII/MAPP Program

Agenda

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>
(40 Minutes)	A. Welcome and Get Acquainted <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Group leader introductions◆ Purpose of the meetings◆ Meeting 1 agenda◆ Participant introductions/matching activity◆ “Rules of the Road”
(50 Minutes)	B. Introduction to The GPSII/MAPP Program <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Partnership and teamwork as foundations for the foster care/adoption program◆ The GPSII/MAPP Program◆ Criteria for Mutual Selection: Twelve Skills for Successful Fostering and Adopting◆ The strengths/needs approach◆ Information sharing◆ Partnership Development Plan
(10 Minutes)	BREAK

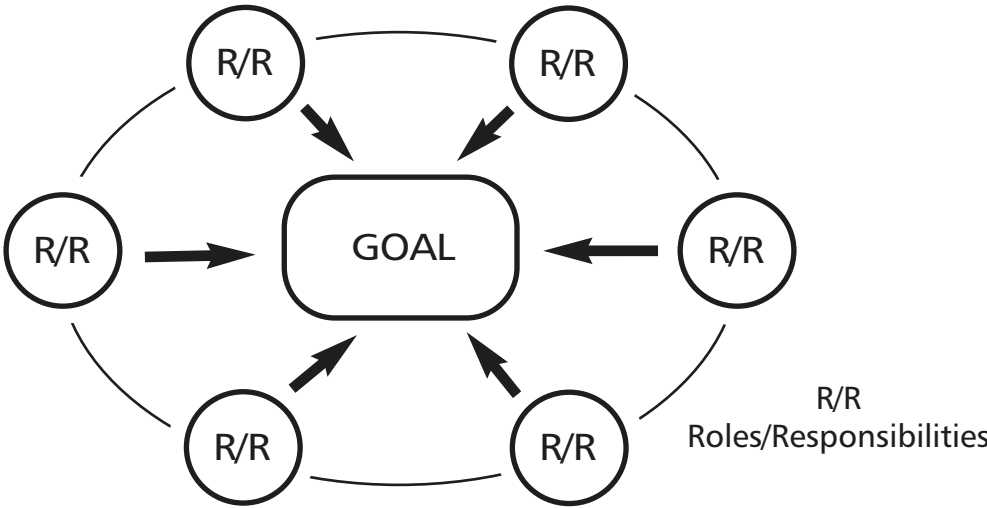
<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>
(30 Minutes)	C. Adoption and Foster Care Today <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Important definitions◆ Review of reasons for entering care, feelings and behaviors of children and youth in care
(40 Minutes)	D. The Roles and Responsibilities of Foster and Adoptive Parents <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Video clip: "Children, Youth and Parents Talk About Foster Care and Adoption."
(10 Minutes)	E. Summary of Meeting 1 and Preview of Meeting 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Summary of Meeting 1◆ Preview of Meeting 2◆ Next step in the mutual selection process◆ A Partnership in Parenting Experience

ROADWORK

- ◆ Read the handouts and bring any questions you have to the next meeting.
- ◆ Talk with someone about foster or adoptive parenting and the importance of partnership this week.
- ◆ Complete your Family Profile. If you have any questions, feel free to call during the week.

Partnership Building and Teamwork in Foster Care

Teamwork – *Teamwork* involves two or more people working together according to a coordinated plan, in a relationship where team members assume different roles and responsibilities, all designed to reach the same goal. Team members can be relied upon to assume their specific jobs or responsibilities.



Partnership – A *partnership* is a relationship where two or more parties each contribute something of value in order to receive benefits. The nature of the contribution and the distribution of benefits are defined by the social contract between the parties.

Partnership implies that there is a “give and take.” Partners exchange “wants” and “offers” of real value to each other.



Within the Alliance Model, child welfare staff and foster and adoptive parents work as a team. As in any effective team, players have different roles, responsibilities and tasks, but each team member has the same goal, in this case, to preserve, or rebuild, the family around the long-term welfare of the child.

This requires that the team members form a partnership or positive alliance with the birth parents, always seeking to keep parents focused on the well-being of the child.

Criteria for Mutual Selection: Twelve Skills for Successful Fostering and Adopting

The GOAL of the **GPSII/MAPP Program** is to prepare individuals and families to make an informed decision about becoming foster and/or adoptive families. The decision is made with the child welfare agency and is based on the capability and willingness to take on the “role” and develop the skills needed to foster and/or adopt. Foster and/or adoptive families who make good decisions and grow in their new roles work best with the agency, birth families and others. These partnerships help children and youth have stability and permanence with a family.

As successful foster and/or adoptive parents you must be able to:

1. Know your own family.
Assess your individual and family strengths and needs; build on strengths and meet needs.
2. Communicate effectively.
Use and develop communication skills needed to foster or adopt.
3. Know the children.
Identify the strengths and needs of children and youth who have been abused, neglected, abandoned, and/or emotionally maltreated.
4. Build strengths; meet needs.
Build on strengths and meet needs of children and youth who are placed with you.
5. Work in partnership.
Develop partnerships with children and youth, birth families, the agency, and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency.
6. Be loss and attachment experts.
Help children and youth develop skills to manage loss and attachment.
7. Manage behaviors.
Help children and youth manage behaviors.
8. Build connections.
Help children and youth maintain and develop relationships that keep them connected to their pasts.
9. Build self-esteem.
Help children and youth build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural and racial identity.

10. Assure health and safety.

Provide a healthy and safe environment for children and youth and keep them free from harm.

11. Assess impact.

Assess the ways fostering and/or adopting will affect your family.

12. Make an informed decision.

Make an informed decision to foster or adopt.

Description of the GPSII/MAPP Program Meetings and Steps

In the Group Preparation and Selection II/Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (GPSII/MAPP) program, prospective foster and adoptive parents are led through a series of experiential activities and guided discussions that enable them to make decisions about their ability, willingness and readiness to foster and/or adopt. Making an informed decision requires that families assess their current skills as parents and their ability to develop the skills needed for successful fostering and adopting. The activities in each meeting promote risk taking and sharing of thoughts and feelings by participants to both help them become more self aware and to help the GPSII/MAPP leaders make better assessments. All activities and content incorporate the principles of adult learning theory; specifically that adults are self-directed, need immediately useful information that is relevant to their life experiences and that they must take responsibility for their own learning. Individuals have different learning styles so the exercises incorporate hearing, seeing and touching or experiencing methodologies in their design.

I. Welcome to the GPSII/MAPP Program

Meeting One of the GPSII/MAPP Program begins with the process of building relationships, examining the role and responsibilities of foster and adoptive parenting, and exploring one's strengths, motivations and concerns. This meeting, and the nine that follow, are designed to be highly experiential and to promote a mutual selection process. The experiential design of each meeting enables foster and adoptive parents to build relationships with each other, to assess their own abilities to foster and/or adopt, and to determine if the agency can meet their needs. In turn, the experiential design enables GPSII/MAPP leaders to assess the prospective foster and adoptive parents' abilities and attitudes. Equally important, the design builds trust between the prospective foster and adoptive parents and the GPSII/MAPP leaders which promotes honest sharing of attitudes, beliefs, and experiences.

In Meeting One, the legal and practice foundation for child welfare is explored through several activities. In one activity, volunteers from the group share a photo of their child. The group is asked to imagine who would care for the child if the parents were gone, and to identify the qualities they want in a substitute caregiver. The exercise is intended to help participants to appreciate the need for an intensive and comprehensive preparation and selection program.

Through a video, the group meets several children and parents who have been involved with foster care and adoption and, with a guided discussion, begins to build empathy for parents and children and to identify their strengths and needs.

During Meeting One, every family receives a copy of a **Profile** as Roadwork, to be completed at home. The Profile gives prospective foster and adoptive families an opportunity to describe themselves in their own words. The Profile is used by the homefinder to inform the decision about certification. It also becomes part of the information kept by the agency to help children, birth families and child welfare workers get to know the foster or adoptive family better and to understand their needs.

The Profiles are returned by Meeting 2, if possible. If absolutely necessary, the family may work on it for an extra week and return it by Meeting 3.

2. Where the MAPP Leads: A Foster Care and Adoption Experience

The purpose of Meeting Two is to provide participants with an opportunity to see foster care and adoption from a variety of perspectives. Nearly the entire meeting is comprised of a sculpting activity in which participants experience how losses and stresses can lead to placement of children into care. This demonstration is one of the most powerful learning activities because it allows participants to experience the trauma that accompanies placement and to appreciate the importance of teamwork and partnership among foster and adoptive parents, parents, and child welfare workers. By participating in this exercise, foster and adoptive parents learn how families can be preserved while children are in care.

Participants are introduced to Erikson's Stages of Development and discuss the impact of abuse and neglect on children's development. In a large group activity participants practice identifying the well-being and permanency needs of children who have been abused, neglected or maltreated using information from four case examples. They discuss their abilities to meet the needs of children and the challenges they might encounter. Leaders closely manage the discussions, identify resources and begin to assess the participant's strengths and needs.

Family Consultations are scheduled after Meeting 2, once the family's profile has been returned. The consultations are meetings in the homes of prospective foster and adoptive families. They are designed to help the families and the leaders jointly assess strengths and needs in a family setting. All family members participate and every family has at least two family consultations during the decision-making and learning process.

During the family consultation, the family and the leader will agree upon a Partnership Development Plan which states who will do specific tasks and when the tasks will be done, in order to meet one or more needs in the preparation, decision making, and mutual selection process.

3. Losses and Gains: The Need to Be a Loss Expert

An activity involving a lost object allows participants to explore the impact of separation and loss on the growth and development of children, and the impact of foster care and adoptive placement on the emotions and behaviors of children and parents. Participants share personal losses (death, divorce, infertility, children leaving home) with each other in pairs or triads and discuss how difficult life experiences may affect their success as foster and adoptive parents. Leaders monitor the small groups in this potentially emotional activity to provide support and intervention when necessary. The meeting emphasizes the teamwork roles of foster and adoptive parents and child welfare workers in turning losses into gains. The GPSII/MAPP leaders share positive and negative effects of their own maturational and situational losses. This promotes trust and encourages personal reflection by participants. This also makes the GPSII leaders “real” to the participants and is specifically placed here so to make discussions easier when GPSII leaders complete the family consultation at the prospective foster and adoptive parent's home.

4. Helping Children with Attachments

Through a visual demonstration using yarn and three volunteers, participants explore the impact of attachment on child development. The meeting uses supervised small and large group discussions to enable participants to recognize how attachments are formed and the special needs of children in foster care and adoption (especially in the areas of building self-concept and using appropriate behavior). Through an imaginary journey exercise, participants experience loss and the feelings that accompany grief. This experiential activity enables participants to apply the information concerning loss and grieving from Meeting Three and the information about attachment from this meeting. Participants practice identifying ways to build positive attachments with children in their care through case examples.

5. Helping Children and Youth Learn to Manage Their Behaviors

Using a group sharing activity, participants discuss techniques for managing behavior, with an emphasis on alternatives to physical punishment. In small groups participants discuss special issues related to discipline for children and youth who have been physically or sexually abused or neglected. This meeting can often be difficult because it includes discussion of physical punishment. The issue of spanking versus not spanking almost always creates controversy and tension and requires group management skills to keep the group on task and to manage conflict.

The meeting emphasizes the need for teamwork and partnership among foster parents, adoptive parents and child welfare workers by identifying alternatives to physical punishment. Once the discussion about physical punishment is finished, fifteen positive discipline techniques are discussed with the group. Prospective parents work in small groups with familiar case examples in order to try to meet children's needs and identify positive discipline techniques that can be used to keep children safe and teach them healthy behaviors to meet their needs.

False allegations of abuse in the foster home are discussed. The leader distinguishes between naïve and manipulative false allegations. The large group discusses the emotional impact of being falsely accused and learns what to expect during the investigation process.

6. Helping Children with Birth Family Connections

Through a forced choice activity, participants explore the importance of helping children in care maintain and build upon their identity, self-concept, and connections. This emotional exercise forces participants to give up crucial connections to family, culture, and/or community, etc.. After processing the emotional impact of losing connections, participants discuss how, in their role as foster and adoptive parents, they can maintain those connections for children in care. Through large group discussions and role plays, the group considers issues such as how children's cultural and ethnic backgrounds help shape their identity; the connections children risk losing when they enter care, and why visits and contacts with birth families and previous foster families are important. Participants take part in a sculpture activity that demonstrates the importance of the Positive Parental Alliance to the well-being of a child in care. Participants engage in a group competition activity that challenges them to identify ways to keep children connected to their families between visits.

7. Gains and Losses: Helping Children Leave Foster Care

Through supervised large and small group activities, participants appreciate the importance of trying to give children messages about moving that they can understand. Children are like sponges; they take in everything around them, but they don't always know how it all fits together. We want to make sure that children understand what is happening around them especially as it has to do with moving; either back home to their parent's home, to another foster home, to an adoptive placement, etc.

Participants also examine concurrent planning, adoption, and independent living. In a carefully planned and monitored discussion, participants share their own extended family's experiences with unwanted separations, and then discuss disruption and its impact on children, families, and agency staff. Through a problem solving exercise

participants focus on the partnership and teamwork role of child welfare workers, foster parents, and adoptive parents in helping children move home, into an adoptive home or into interdependent living. The meeting features a discussion of a video of a mother, foster mother and worker planning the return of the mother's children to her home.

8. Understanding the Impact of Fostering or Adopting

In Meeting 8, prospective parents explore the impact of fostering and adopting on their own families. Using a role play, participants assess their own strengths and needs in managing conflicts about confidentiality and privacy in the foster or adoptive home. In a second role play they practice managing a conflict between their birth child and a child in care. Through a large group discussion, participants define the five characteristics of a family system and how each part will be affected by fostering and/or adopting. Participants use an Eco-Map, a visual tool, to identify their own family's strengths and needs. In what are often emotional discussions, participants examine how fostering and adopting can affect prospective parents' marriages, own children and relationships with extended family.

9. Teamwork and Partnerships in Foster Care and Adoption

This meeting reviews what the participants have learned so far about building a teamwork relationship with the agency and identifying challenges to teamwork. A simulated case review and large group discussion provides a rationale for the importance of working as part of a team with child welfare staff, other service providers and court personnel, as well as the parents of children and youth in care.

10. Endings and Beginnings

This meeting features a panel composed of experienced foster or adoptive parents, birth parents, children in care, and individuals who can respond to questions from the participants. The important tasks of this meeting will be to assess group members' strengths and needs as foster parents or adoptive parents. There also will be some time to say good-bye...the ending. As the preparation/mutual selection process is coming to an end, so begins the transition into becoming a foster or adoptive family...the beginning.

After the last meeting there is a final Family Consultation during which the leader and the parents agree about the family's future role as a foster family, as an adoptive family, or as another kind of child welfare advocate. A Professional Development Plan, developed by the leader and the parents, provides direction for support of the family during the next six months in the child welfare program.

Strengths/Needs Assessment

What is a strengths/needs assessment?

The strengths/needs assessment is a tool to help prospective foster and adoptive families look at those qualities and skills that are important to successful foster and adoptive parenting. No two families are alike. Every family has or can develop many skills that will be helpful in their new roles. Likewise, every family has a set of needs that must be fulfilled to take on their new roles.

What do we do with the strengths/needs assessments?

At the end of several of the meetings you will be asked to assess your strengths and your needs in each of the skill areas that have been developed in the program. Come prepared to talk about your strengths and needs at the following meeting, as well as to hand in your written suggestions to the leaders about improving the meetings. The written statements will help your leaders plan the group meetings as well as the family consultation for your family.

Robert Case Study

Robert is a 12-year-old black child who was placed in a white foster home two weeks ago, when his mother began serving a three-month sentence for passing bad checks. His father's last known address, a few years ago, was a homeless shelter. Robert has no brothers or sisters and no extended family members have yet been identified who are able to provide a temporary home for Robert. It is expected that Robert and his mother will be reunified when she completes her sentence but right now, Robert really misses his mom, his friends, and his neighborhood.

Robert has been extremely quiet since he entered the foster home. He tends to stay in his room, listening to his music. He seems uncomfortable with eye contact and doesn't perform the chores he has been asked to do, such as making his own bed or picking up his bath towels. Robert is capable of taking care of his own personal needs. He had to change schools when he entered foster care and doesn't like his new 6th grade teacher, although he has received passing grades on his tests and homework. He says everything is too hard in this new school and the other kids aren't as friendly as in his old neighborhood. He hit another student in school when the boy asked him rude questions about his family and why he had moved into this school.

Partnership Development Plan

As part of partnership building in the preparation and the mutual selection process, it is important to have a clear understanding of all the strengths and needs involved in your becoming a foster and/or adoptive parent. Throughout the process you will discover things you may want to work on as an individual or as a family. Professional development as a foster family begins now and continues throughout the time you care for children who have been abused and neglected. It is important for you to assess your own strengths and needs.

Your program co-leaders will also openly share with you any concerns they have regarding your ability to become foster or adoptive parents. It is hoped that, together, needs can be identified and met so you can make the best decision for your family. Every time you talk about your progress in making a decision about fostering and/or adopting and in developing new skills it will be helpful to write out what you plan to do next. The following steps are designed to help you document your discussions:

Steps

1. Describe the need clearly.

2. Explain why this is a need.

3. Develop an action plan including:

- A. What tasks will be done to meet the need?

B. Who will do each task?

C. When will we evaluate progress?

D. How we will know whether the need is met?

E. What will happen if the need is met; if the need is not met?

A Brief Summary of Child Welfare Laws Important to Foster and Adoptive Parents

Hailed as the most important piece of child welfare legislation enacted in three decades, the **Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, P.L. 96-272**, required states to establish programs and make procedural reforms to serve children in their own homes, prevent out-of-home placement, and facilitate family reunification following placement. The Act also transferred federal foster care funding from IV-A to a new Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and provided funds to help states pay adoption expenses for children whose special needs make adoption difficult. A major provision of P.L. 96-272 was that judges determine whether “reasonable efforts” had been made to enable children to remain safely at home before they were placed in foster care.

Title XX of the Social Security Act was amended to include the Social Services Block Grant to provide child protective services funding to states. This became the major source of state social service funding.

The New York State Child Abuse Prevention Act of 1985 was enacted, establishing: standards, training, and qualifications for persons responsible for the care of children, including mandatory training for all new CPS caseworkers within the first three months of employment; access to certain records of the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment; the procedure for establishing relationships between law enforcement officials and child protective agencies; and the investigation, prevention, and treatment of child abuse and maltreatment in residential care.

The Family Preservation and Support Initiative, Public Law 103-66, gave funding to states for family preservation and family support planning and services. The legislation provided funding for:

- community-based family support programs that work with families before a crisis occurs to enhance child development and increase family stability;

- family preservation programs that serve families in crisis or at risk of having their children placed in foster care as well as other follow-up services, including family reunification; and

- evaluation, research, training, and technical assistance in the area of family support and family preservation.

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) P.L. 103-382 of 1994, outlawed discriminatory practices, and the **Interethnic Placement Provisions (IEP)**, P.L. 104-188 of 1996, clarified the original legislation and created sanctions for state and agencies which fail to comply with the act. MEPA forbids the delay or denial of a foster or adoptive placement solely on the basis of the race, color, or national origin of the prospective foster parent, adoptive parent, or the child involved. It also compels states to make diligent efforts to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the children for whom homes are needed, and requires the federal government to impose fiscal penalties for states not in compliance with the antidiscrimination provisions.

The Adoptive and Safe Families Act (ASFA), Public Law 105-89, represents the most significant change in federal child welfare law since the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. ASFA reauthorized and increased funding for the Family Preservation and Support program, renaming it the Promoting Safety and Stable Families program. In general, ASFA is intended to promote the primacy of child safety and timely decisions for permanency while clarifying “reasonable efforts” and continuing family preservation.

Important Definitions for Foster and Adoptive Parents

Note: Certain terms are defined in this Glossary by statutory or regulatory language. Citations for the statute or regulation appear in parentheses. Abbreviations are as follows: FCA – Family Court Act, SSL – Social Services Law, NYCRR – New York State Code of Rules and Regulations.

Abandonment – A child is “abandoned” by his or her parent if such parent evinces (shows) intent to forego his or her parental rights and obligations. Such intent is manifested by his or her failure to visit the child and communicate with the child or agency, although able to do so and not prevented or discouraged from doing so by the agency. [FCA § 1012; SSL § 384-b (5)].

Abused Child – A child less than eighteen years of age whose parent or other person legally responsible for his or her care: (i) inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury by other than accidental means which causes or creates a substantial risk of death, or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of physical or emotional health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ; or (ii) creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of physical or emotional health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ; or (iii) commits, or allows to be committed, an act of sexual abuse against such child as defined in the penal law. [SSL § 371 (4-b)].

Adoption – A legal procedure that transfers responsibilities for a child from the birth parents to the adoptive parents. The adoptive parent has full parental legal rights and responsibilities.

Adoption Planning – A procedure begun by an agency, once guardianship and custody of a child has been transferred from the birth parents to the agency. It includes identifying the child's needs, selecting a potential adoptive family, completing a home study, beginning the placement process, supervising the placement, and finalizing the adoption.

Adoption Subsidy (Recurring) – A monthly payment made to adoptive parents who have adopted a child who meets New York State eligibility standards. Based on the special medical, developmental, or social needs of the child or sibling group, this financial assistance begins after the finalization of the adoption and lasts until the child reaches the age of 21. The amount can vary from case to case. (See SSL Article 6 title 9.)

Allegations – Statements in a child abuse/maltreatment report that have not been proven.

Another Planned Living Arrangement – Formerly known as Independent Living, APLA is a permanency planning goal to assist foster care youth in their transition to self-sufficiency by connecting the youth to an adult permanency resource, equipping the youth with life skills, and, upon discharge, connecting the youth with any needed community and/or specialized services. [18 NYCRR 430.12 (f)]

Approved Foster Home – A home in which temporary or long-term care is provided to a child whose care and custody or guardianship and custody have been transferred to an authorized agency pursuant to the provisions of section 384 or 384-a of the Social Services

Law or who has been placed with a social services official pursuant to article 3, 7 or 10 of the Family Court Act and who is cared for 24 hours a day in a family home with a foster parent who is a relative within the second or third degree to the parent(s) or stepparent(s) of the child and who is duly approved by an authorized agency as required by this Part. [18 NYCRR 443.1(f)]

Assessment – The process through which the agency gathers the information it needs to form a case plan to help preserve the family. See Case Plan.

Best Interests of the Child – The best possible decision from the available options regarding the child - taking into account his or her physical, psychological, cognitive, and emotional needs. This term, undefined in statute, is used by Family Court.

Birth Family – The family to whom the child was born. The birth family is the child's biological family.

Case Plan – A description of the specific steps that will be carried out to address the reasons for the child's placement, based on the information the agency has gathered about a family. The case plan describes: 1) what the birth parents will do to develop strengths and meet needs; 2) what the caseworker will do to help the birth parents and child; 3) what others, including foster parents, will do to help the birth parents and child; and 4) when the case plan's goals will be met.

Case Review – A regular review of how each case of a child in foster care is progressing. The purpose of the case review is to make sure that the family and others are taking the steps they agreed to in the case plan. The case review is also meant to make sure that a child does not drift for a long time in foster care and that the child will be able to live in a safe, permanent home by returning home, living with relatives, or being freed for adoption. Procedures may differ from agency to agency, but the review must occur every six months. Each review must include at least one representative who is not involved with the case (third party reviewer).

Certified Foster Home – A home that has received a New York State certificate to provide foster care after an agency home study finds that the family meets the certification requirements. The certificate limits the number of children to be placed in the home and states any restrictions on child characteristics. (See SSL § 433.3.)

Child Protection Services (CPS) Worker – A local social services district worker who conducts investigations to determine if a child has been abused or neglected and if there is risk of future abuse or neglect in the household where the child is living or may go to live. If the CPS worker determines that the child's safety is at risk, he or she will devise a plan to provide for the child's safety which may include removing the child from the home.

Concurrent Planning – Planning that works toward returning the child home while simultaneously developing an alternative plan for the child. Concurrent planning recognizes that the parent(s) may be unable or unwilling to establish a safe environment for the child and pursues another permanent goal for the child. It focuses on achieving a permanent goal for a

child within one year of placement by highlighting certain aspects of casework practice.

Confidentiality – A basic principle and agency requirement for foster parents to not discuss a child’s family background, personal history, problems, or special needs with anyone other than those clearly assigned professional responsibility for some aspect of a foster child’s care and supervision. These matters cannot be discussed with the family’s friends, neighbors, or other relatives who are not part of the foster parent’s household unless for health and safety reasons. Confidential information includes information furnished by foster parents, the agency, the caseworker, the child, or the child’s birth family. It may concern the family background of the child, the child and family’s medical history and condition, and/or the services being provided to the child.

Court Hearing – Formal legal proceeding at which the court hears evidence and oral argument by the parties.

- ◆ **Initial appearance hearing** – First hearing in Family Court after the filing of a petition that allows the respondent to admit or deny the allegations contained in the petition.
- ◆ **Fact-finding hearing** – A formal legal proceeding at which the court hears evidence and oral argument by the parties regarding allegations in a petition.
- ◆ **Dispositional hearing** – The hearing to determine what should be done for the child. This usually follows a fact-finding hearing.

Court Order – A written or oral directive of the court requiring a party to take a particular action or refrain from taking an action. **Note:** An oral order of the court is only effective if given to the party, to do or not do an act, in open court and on the record.

Custody – Physical and legal responsibility for a child and authority to act in place of the parent, granted by the court. Examples of physical responsibility are food, shelter, and necessary transportation.

Diligent Efforts – Attempts by an agency to assist, develop, and encourage a meaningful relationship between the child and his or her parents. Examples are assessing what services the family needs, providing or arranging for those services, and making arrangements for child/parent visits.

Diligent Search – The attempt to locate a missing mother, legal or alleged father, legal guardian, or responsible relative of a child placed in foster care. The purpose is to locate and involve missing parents in the planning process and to satisfy the court that adequate efforts were made to locate the parents and help the court decide how to handle notifying the parents about an upcoming court proceeding.

Disruption – When foster parents decide they are unable to continue caring for a particular child (for a variety of reasons) and that child must leave their home. The term “disruption” is also used when a child’s behavior or circumstances lead to the child being moved from his or

her placement.

Emergency Placement – Placement of a child who has been removed from his or her home on an emergency basis. An emergency placement may be made with no prior notice and is temporary until a regular foster home can be identified. In some counties, foster parents who are willing to take emergency placements are designated as emergency foster homes.

Extension of Placement – Continuation of the original placement order after review by the court.

Family Court – A court designated to hear matters related to family members. This court handles abuse and neglect proceedings and reviews voluntary placements, juvenile delinquents and PINS (persons in need of supervision) cases, termination of parental rights, child support, paternity, adoption, guardianship, custody, and family offenses.

Finalization – The final step of the adoption process. The attorney, on behalf of the adoptive parents, files the appropriate legal documents to finalize the adoption. A court hearing is set. After the court hearing, the custody of the child is legally transferred to the adoptive parents. The family receives a new birth certificate for the child with his or her last name changed to that of the adoptive family.

Finding – What the court determines the facts of the case to be, based on the evidence presented.

Foster Care – Foster care of children means all activities and functions provided relative to the care of a child away from his or her home 24 hours per day in a foster family home or a duly certified or approved foster family boarding home or a duly certified group home, agency boarding home, childcare institution, health care facility, or any combination thereof. [See 18 NYCRR 427.2(a).]

Freed for Adoption – Child freed for adoption means a foster child whose custody and guardianship were committed to an authorized agency pursuant to section 384 of the Social Services Law. A foster child who has been freed for adoption includes a child whose care and custody have been transferred to an authorized agency, pursuant to section 384-a of the Social Services Law. Children who have been placed with a social services official pursuant to articles 3, 7, and 10 of the Family Court Act are excluded from the definition of child freed for adoption. [See 18 NYCRR 441.20(a) (3).] **OR** Legally freed child means a person under the age of 18 years: (1) whose custody and guardianship have been transferred to an authorized agency as a result of either a surrender instrument executed pursuant to section 383-c or 384 of the Social Services Law or an order of the Family Court or the Surrogate's Court made pursuant to section 384-b of the Social Services Law; or (2) whose care and custody have been transferred to an authorized agency pursuant to section 1055 of the Family Court Act or section 384-a of the Social Services Law and where such child's parents are both deceased, or where one parent is deceased and the other parent is not a person entitled to notice

pursuant to sections 111 and 111-a of the Domestic Relations Law. [18NYCRR 420.1(a)]

Guardianship – Physical and legal responsibility of a child granted to a person or authorized agency to act as parents. Guardianship may be granted by the court when parental rights have been suspended or terminated. Generally, a person can be designated a guardian of the person, of the property, or both. A guardian of the person has the right to make decisions concerning the individual. The care, custody and control of the individual is also usually (although not necessarily) granted to the person as well. A guardian of the property is a person who can make decisions concerning the property of the individual. Guardians either petition the court to be appointed or are designated by the parent either in a will or by a written document with approval by a court to act for the child.

Home Study – The process of gathering information to determine if a prospective foster home can be certified or approved. Agency workers (usually called home finders) visit the home and collect detailed information about the applicants as well as other household members and potential caregivers for the child. The worker submits a report to the court or agency, describing the home environment, background, social history, and current makeup of the family situation. A similar home study is conducted for a prospective adoptive home.

Independent Living – Older youth in foster care generally are to be provided with information and training to help prepare them to live independently. Agency staff and foster parents prepare these youth to assume the rights and responsibilities of adults in society.

Indicated – A child abuse/neglect report that has “a fair preponderance of the evidence” to support the allegations. [See SSL § 412(12) and 18 NYCRR 433.2(c).]

Investigation (of a CPS report) – Gathering of facts by a Child Protective Services (CPS) worker based on the State’s requirements for home visits, interviews, etc., to determine whether there is a fair preponderance of the evidence that the subject of the report abused or maltreated the child.

Law Guardian – An independent attorney appointed by Family Court and paid by the county to solely represent the child’s interests. Each child in care is appointed his or her own law guardian by the court.

Life Book – A combination of a story, diary, and scrapbook that has information about a child’s life experiences, with such items as pictures of birth family and foster families, report cards, souvenirs of special events, and medical history. A Life Book should be started when children first come into care. Life Books are best developed in partnership by the foster parents, birth parents, caseworker, and child. Children take their Life Books with them when they return home, are adopted, or go into independent living.

Neglected (or Maltreated) Child – A child less than eighteen years of age: (i) whose physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as a result of the failure of his parent or other person legally responsible

for his or her care to exercise a minimum degree of care:(a) in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, medical or surgical care, though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so; or(b) in providing the child with proper supervision or guardianship, by unreasonably inflicting or allowing to be inflicted harm, or a substantial risk thereof, including the infliction of excessive corporal punishment; by misusing a drug or drugs; by misusing alcoholic beverages to the extent that he loses self-control of his actions; or by any other acts of a similarly serious nature requiring the aid of the court; provided, however, that where the respondent is voluntarily and regularly participating in a rehabilitative program, evidence that the respondent has repeatedly misused a drug or drugs or alcoholic beverages to the extent that he or she loses self-control of his or her actions shall not establish that the child is a neglected child in the absence of evidence establishing that the child's physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as set forth in paragraph (i) of this subdivision; or (ii) who has been abandoned by his parents or other person legally responsible for his care. [SSL §371(4-a)]

No Reasonable Efforts – A finding by the court that no reasonable efforts should be made to prevent or eliminate the need for placement or to return the child home after being placed in foster care due to certain circumstances, which are spelled out in the law. (See FCA § 1039-b.) See also Reasonable Efforts.

Notification Letter – A letter required by state law that informs the parents or caregivers that they have been named as a subject or other person in a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment made to the State Central Register (Child Abuse Hotline).

The letter must contain the Register number, report I.D. number, and date of the report. A different notification letter informs the subject or other person named in a report of the determination.

Parental Rights – The right to make major decisions for a child, such as deciding a child's religion or giving permission to marry or serve in the military. Also includes the legal right to be in contact with the child.

Permanence – Permanence is the assurance of a family for a child intended to last a lifetime. Permanence assures a child of a family where he or she will be safe and nurtured. Foster parents work in teamwork with the caseworker and others to assure that a child returns to his or her home or has a timely plan for adoption or placement with extended family.

Permanency Hearing – A hearing held in accordance with section 1039-b, 1052, 1055, or 1055-a of this article (Family Court Act Article 10) for the purpose of reviewing the foster care status of the child and the appropriateness of the permanency plan developed by the Social Services official. [FCA§ 1012(k)] For the purposes of calculating the initial period of placement, such placement shall be deemed to have commenced the earlier of the date of the fact-finding of abuse or neglect of the child pursuant to section 1051 of this Part or 60 days after the date the child was removed from his or her home in accordance with the provisions

of this article. The initial permanency hearing shall be held no later than 8 months following placement. Each subsequent permanency hearing shall be held as directed by the court but no later than 6 months following the preceding permanency hearing. [FCA § 1055-a(3)(c)]

Permanency Planning – Planning by agencies to protect a child's right to grow up within a permanent family. Agencies develop plans to place children in living situations that will meet their needs and give them stability for the longest period of time.

Person In Need of Supervision (PINS) – A person less than 18 years of age who is habitually truant or who is incorrigible, ungovernable or habitually disobedient, and beyond the lawful control of a parent or other person legally responsible for such child's care, or other lawful authority (effective July 1, 2002). [SSL § 371(6)].

Person Legally Responsible – Child's custodian, guardian, or any other person responsible for a child's care.

Petition – Formal written application to the court requesting action by the court.

Physical Abuse – Physical abuse is defined by state law and is usually indicated by unexplained bruises, welts, burns, fractures/dislocations and lacerations or abrasions. Other behavioral indicators include a child who feels deserving of punishment, is wary of adult contact, is apprehensive when other children cry, is aggressive, withdraws, is frightened of his or her parent(s), is afraid to go home, reports injury by parent(s), often has vacant or frozen stares, lies very still while surveying surrounding (infant), responds to questions in monosyllables, demonstrates inappropriate or precocious maturity or indiscriminately seeks affection.¹

Placement Order – An order made by a court granting the custody of a child to an agency for a specific amount of time.

Preventive Services – Those supportive and rehabilitative services provided to children and their families in accordance with the provisions of this Part for the purpose of: averting a disruption of a family which will or could result in placement of a child in foster care; enabling a child who has been placed in foster care to return to his or her family at an earlier time than would otherwise be possible; or reducing the likelihood that a child who has been discharged from foster care would return to such care. [See 18 NYCRR 423.2(b).]

Reasonable Efforts – A finding by the court that reasonable efforts should be made to prevent or eliminate the need for placement or to return a child home after being placed in foster care. Health and safety of the child are the paramount concern in determining reasonable efforts. (See FCA § 1039-b.) See also No Reasonable Efforts.

¹ Adapted from Drews, K., Salus, M., and Dodge, D. 1979. Child Protective Services In-Service Training for Supervisors and Workers. Washington, D.C. U.S. DHEW, ACYF, Children's Bureau, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, HEW Contract No. 105-79-1103, pp. III 6, 1-4.

Relatives Within the Third Degree – Relatives within the third degree are those who are related to the parent(s) or legal step-parent(s) through blood or marriage in the first, second, or third degree in the kinship line. In relation to the child, they are: grandparents and great-grandparents; aunts and uncles and their spouse; siblings and their spouse; first cousins and their spouse; great-aunts and great-uncles and their spouse; and great-great grandparents. In addition, a person who is unrelated to a child may be approved to be a relative foster parent to that child if the person is related to the child's half-sibling(s) and such approval will allow the half-siblings to remain together. [See 18 NYCRR 443.1(i).]

Report (Child Abuse/Maltreatment) – Written allegation from the State Central Register (SCR) of “reasonable cause” to suspect child abuse/maltreatment giving the agency legal authority to begin an investigation.

Respite Care – The provision of brief and temporary care and supervision of children for the purpose of relieving parents or foster parents of the care of such children or foster children when the family or foster family needs immediate relief in order to be able to maintain or restore family functioning or to provide relief for foster parents from the stress of providing care for a severely handicapped or emotionally disturbed foster child or for a foster child with a chronic or recurring illness. [See 18 NYCRR 435.2(d).]

Recertification and Reapproval – The annual process of reviewing the certified or approved status of a foster home when the family wishes to remain eligible to care for foster children.

Reunification – When a child returns from foster care to live with his or her birth family.

Risk – Risk is the likelihood of any degree of long-term harm or maltreatment. It does not predict when the future harm might occur but rather the likelihood of the harm happening at all. Foster parents can help caseworkers assess risk and likelihood of future harm.

Safety – A child is safe when there is no immediate or impending danger of serious harm to a child's life or health as a result of acts of commission or omission (actions or inactions) by the child's parents and/or caretakers.

Self-Concept – How an individual feels about who he or she is. Self-concept includes the qualities of being lovable, capable, worthwhile, and responsible. Children who have been sexually or physically abused or neglected often blame themselves for their families' problems. Sometimes it is hard for children who have been treated badly to feel good about who they are. Their self-concept is poor. Foster parents should help children and youth understand and feel good about who they are, including their cultural, racial, and religious identities.

Service Plan Review (SPR) – A formal meeting scheduled at set periods to assess and reassess the service plan for the family and child and to review the permanency planning goal set for the child. Participants discuss progress toward the service plan and revise the plan if necessary. At a minimum, participants should include the caseworker, supervisor, birth parents,

foster parents, child (age 10 and up, or younger if able to participate), and third party reviewer (an agency staff member who is not involved with the case). (See 18 NYCRR Part 428.)

Sexual Abuse – Child sexual abuse involves any interaction, contact or non-contact, between a child and any person—child or adult—in a power position in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of another person. Sexual abuse is defined by state law and is usually indicated by a child’s disclosure and a combination of physical indicators including difficulty in walking or sitting; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; pain, swelling, or itching in genital area; pain on urination; bruises, bleeding or laceration in external genitalia, vaginal, or anal areas; vaginal/penile discharge; venereal disease, especially in pre-teens; poor sphincter tone; pregnancy; bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge; poor peer relationships; delinquency; running away; change in school performance; withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior.

Source – Person who suspects child abuse or maltreatment is occurring and calls the Hotline to take a report.

State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) (Hotline) – A file (register) maintained in Albany containing records of all indicated reports and reports under investigation. The Hotline receives and screens phone calls of suspected abuse and maltreatment statewide and distributes the information to the appropriate county.

Subject – Subject of the report means any of the following persons who are allegedly responsible for causing injury, abuse, or maltreatment to, or allowing injury, abuse, or maltreatment to be inflicted on, a child named in a report to the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment: (i) a child’s parent or guardian; (ii) a director, operator, employee, or volunteer of a home or facility operated or supervised by an authorized agency, the Division for Youth, or an office of the Department of Mental Hygiene or a family day-care home, a day-care center, a group family day-care home or a day services program; (iii) a consultant or any person who is an employee or volunteer of a corporation, partnership, organization or any governmental entity which provides goods and services pursuant to contractor other arrangement which provides for such consultant or person to have regular and substantial contact with children; or (iv) any other person 18 years of age or older legally responsible for a child, including the child’s custodian, guardian, and any person responsible for the child’s care at the relevant time. Custodian may include any person continually or at regular intervals found in the same household as the child when the conduct of such person causes or contributes to the abuse or maltreatment of the child. [18 NYCRR432.1 (d)]

Substantiated (Indicated) – Found to have a fair preponderance of the evidence.

Summons – A document issued by the court, usually handed in person, notifying the person to appear in court at a day specified to answer a petition.

Special Needs – A child with special needs means a child who: (i) the State has determined cannot or shall not be returned to the home of his or her parents; (ii) is handicapped or is hard-to-place; and (iii) a reasonable but unsuccessful effort has been made to place the child with appropriate adoptive parents without adoption assistance, except where such an effort would not be in the best interest of the child. “Handicapped child” means a child who possesses a specific physical, mental, or emotional condition or disability of such severity or kind which, in the opinion of the department, would constitute a significant obstacle to the child’s adoption. Such conditions include, but are not limited to: (i) any medical or dental condition which will require repeated or frequent hospitalization, treatment or follow-up care; (ii) any physical handicap, by reason of physical defect or deformity, whether congenital or acquired by accident, injury, or disease, which makes or may be expected to make a child totally or partially incapacitated for education or for remunerative occupation, as described in sections 1002 and 4001 of the Education Law; or makes or may be expected to make a child handicapped, as described in section 2581 of the Public Health Law; (iii) any substantial disfigurement, such as the loss or deformation of facial features, torso, or extremities; or (iv) a diagnosed personality or behavioral problem, psychiatric disorder, serious intellectual incapacity or brain damage which seriously affects the child’s ability to relate to his peers and/or authority figures, including mental retardation or developmental disability. “Hard-to-place child” means a child, other than a handicapped child: (i) who has not been placed for adoption within six months from the date his or her guardianship and custody were committed to the social services official or the voluntary authorized agency; or (ii) who has not been placed for adoption within six months from the date a previous adoption placement terminated and the child was returned to the care of the social services official or the voluntary authorized agency; or (iii) who meets any of the conditions listed in clauses (a) through (f) of this subparagraph, which the department has identified as constituting a significant obstacle to a child’s adoption, notwithstanding that the child has been in the guardianship and custody of the social services official or the voluntary authorized agency for less than six months: (a) the child is one of a group of two siblings (including half-siblings) who are free for adoption and it is considered necessary that the group be placed together pursuant to sections 421.2 (e) and 421.18 (d) of this Part; and (1) at least one of the children is five-years-old or older; or (2) at least one of the children is a member of a minority group which is substantially overrepresented in New York State foster care in relation to the percentage of that group to the State’s total population; or (3) at least one of the children is otherwise eligible for subsidy in accordance with the provisions of this subdivision; (b) the child is the sibling or half-sibling of a child already adopted and it is considered necessary that such children be placed together pursuant to sections 421.2 (e) and 421.18 (d) of this Part; and (1) the child to be adopted is five-years-old or older; or (2) the child is a member of a minority group which is substantially over represented in New York State foster care in relation to the percentage of that group to the State’s total population; or (3) the sibling or half-sibling already adopted is eligible for subsidy or would have been eligible for subsidy if application had been made at the time of or prior to the adoption; (c) the child is one of a group of three or more siblings (including half-siblings) who are free for adoption and

it is considered necessary that the group be placed together pursuant to sections 421.2 (e) and 421.18 (d) of this Part; or (d) the child is eight-years-old or older and is a member of a minority group which is substantially overrepresented in New York State foster care in relation to the percentage of that group to the State's total population; or (e) the child is 10-years-old or older; or (f) the child is hard to place with parent(s) other than his/her present foster parent(s) because he/she has been in care with the same foster parent(s) for 18 months or more prior to the signing of the adoption placement agreement by such foster parent(s) and has developed a strong attachment to his/her foster parent(s) while in such care and separation from the foster parent(s) would adversely affect the child's development. (18 NYCRR 421.24)

Strengths – The skills, resources, qualities, and experiences that are part of each person. Foster parents should look for and recognize strengths in themselves, children, and birth parents. Identifying strengths helps in understanding and appreciating others and in gaining insight into a person's life and behaviors. Part of seeing a person's strengths lies in seeing that person in a positive light.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) – Commitment of the guardianship and custody of a child to an authorized agency to prepare for adoption planning. Involuntary TPR occurs when a court determines that the parents have failed for a period of more than one year following the date such child came into the care of an authorized agency substantially and continuously or repeatedly to maintain contact with or plan for the future of the child, although physically and financially able to do so, notwithstanding the agency's diligent efforts to encourage and strengthen the parental relationship when such efforts will not be detrimental to the best interests of the child. (See SSL §384-b). TPR can also be voluntary, when birth parents decide on their own to surrender their parental rights. (See SSL §384.)

Unfounded (Unsubstantiated) – A report that has been determined by CPS where CPS has not found that a fair preponderance of the evidence of the alleged abuse or maltreatment exists.[See 18 NYCRR 432.1(f).]

Uniform Case Record (UCR) – A means of documenting case assessment and service planning through its various forms (e.g., progress notes, service plans, and plan amendments). The UCR provides a structure to help guide agency efforts at permanency planning and to record such efforts, thereby giving caseworkers a useful tool in working with families and children. (See 18 NYCRR Part 428.) (NYS FP Manual)

Well-being

Well-being is not defined in federal law, but in the GPSII/MAPP program well-being includes the physical, emotional, social, mental and moral/spiritual healthy development of a child.

Well-being is assessed based on the following questions:

- ◆ Is the child or youth **physically healthy**? If not, does the child have the medical attention required to restore or optimize health, given the condition?
- ◆ Is the child or youth **emotionally healthy**? Does the child experience being lovable, capable and worthwhile?
- ◆ Is the child or youth **socially healthy**? Does the child interact in work and play activities at a level appropriate for age and abilities?
- ◆ Is the child or youth **intellectually** or **mentally** on target? If not, does the child have the educational resources required to optimize intellectual growth?
- ◆ Is the child or youth **morally/spiritually healthy**? Does the child have a sense of right and wrong and an ability to understand the feelings of others? Does the child have hope in the future?

Strengths/Needs and Permanency for Children

1. What possible strengths did you see in the children?

2. What possible strengths did you see in the parents of the children?

3. What are some possible needs of the children, especially related to permanency?

4. What possible needs did you see in the birth parents?

5. What did the foster and adoptive parents specifically do to meet the needs of children and parents?

Roles and Responsibilities of Foster Parents

As a foster parent, you are responsible for the temporary care and nurturing of a child who has been placed outside his or her own home. During a time of disruption and change, you are giving a child a home. At the same time, your role includes working with the caseworker and the child's family so that the child can return home safely, when appropriate.

The role of the foster parent is to:

- ◆ Provide temporary care for children, giving them a safe, stable, nurturing environment.
- ◆ Cooperate with the caseworker and the child's parents in carrying out a permanency plan, including participating in that plan.
- ◆ Understand the need for, and goals of, family visits and help out with those visits.
- ◆ Help the child cope with the separation from his or her home.
- ◆ Provide guidance, discipline, a good example, and as many positive experiences as possible.
- ◆ Encourage and supervise school attendance, participate in teacher conferences, and keep the child's caseworker informed about any special educational needs.
- ◆ Work with the agency in arranging for the child's regular and/or special medical and dental care.
- ◆ Work with the child on creating a Life Book – a combination of a story, diary, and scrapbook that can help children understand their past experiences so they can feel better about themselves and be better prepared for the future.
- ◆ Inform the caseworker promptly about any problems or concerns so that needs can be met through available services.

Foster parents have the right to:

- ◆ Accept or reject a child for placement in a foster home.
- ◆ Define and limit the number of children that can be placed in the foster home, within legal capacity.
- ◆ Receive information on each child who is to be placed in the foster home.
- ◆ Expect regular visits from the child's caseworker to exchange information, plan together, and discuss any concerns about the child.
- ◆ Participate in regular conferences in the foster home to discuss the child's plan every 90 days or less as required (whenever necessary in times of crisis or emergency).
- ◆ Receive notice of, and participate in Service Plan Reviews and Family Court permanency hearings on a child placed in their home.
- ◆ Receive training on meeting the needs of children in care.
- ◆ Have their personal privacy respected.

Resource Guide for Foster, Adoptive and Foster/Adoptive Parents

Do Not Copy!

Instructions:

Following are suggested handouts for prospective foster and adoptive parents. Your agency staff, foster parents and adoptive parents will need to develop them to reflect your policy and practices:

- ◆ A list of the rights, responsibilities and licensing/approval requirements of all foster parents in your agency.
- ◆ A list of the rights and responsibilities of children and youth in foster care in your community.
- ◆ A list of the rights and responsibilities of parents of children in foster care in your community.
- ◆ Your agency's organizational chart and important contact information for managers, supervisors and staff.
- ◆ Your agency's non-discrimination statement, including information about the requirements of MEPA/IEP (The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 and amendment of 1996).
- ◆ Description of your local and state foster and adoptive parent associations, including phone numbers and addresses of officers, regular meeting dates, etc.
- ◆ Description of foster and adoptive parent support groups.
- ◆ Description of your local judicial system including important names, addresses and phone numbers.
- ◆ A list of the names of judges involved with child welfare cases.
- ◆ Description of universities, colleges, agencies, etc., which provide in-service training opportunities. Include contact names and numbers.
- ◆ Descriptions of mental health agencies used by your agency, including addresses and phone numbers.
- ◆ A description of the policies and procedures required when a foster family is accused of abuse or neglect in the foster home.
- ◆ Grievance procedures.

