

## **Onondaga County Foster Parent Confidentiality Policy • May 2013**

This document is an attempt to clarify what case information should be shared with foster parents. Foster parents are trained regarding confidentiality and are aware that they cannot discuss case information with their friends, neighbors or relatives. Information that we provide to them should be factual and shared on a professional basis.

**Foster parents are vital members of the child's service team as they are the people who meet the child's needs on a daily basis. Therefore, they have a need to know information, which would affect their ability to care for the child, work with the parents and assist us in achieving the child's permanency goal.**

***Background:** Foster parents should be informed of the reason(s) that a child is being placed in their home. Let them know if this is the child's first time in care or is the child reentering foster care. Also, is this a move from one foster home to another or a step down from a higher level of care? They should know if the child is in care due to abuse/maltreatment or if the reasons for placement are child centered.*

*You need to provide as much specific information as possible regarding the circumstances surrounding the child's placement in care so that the foster parents are better equipped to deal with the child's reaction to his/her situation.*

**Behavioral:** Foster parents need detailed information about the child's behavior. For example: aggressive behavior, destructive behavior, sexual acting out, toileting issues, sleeping issues, poor peer relationships etc. Be as specific as possible about the behaviors.

**Education:** When placing a child you should provide as much educational background about the child as possible. Inform the foster parents of the child's grade or academic level of functioning and give them a copy of the report card if it is available. Let them know if the child receives special educational services and provide the child's IEP if you have a copy. If the child is changing schools let them know the name of the last district and school. If you know, tell them how the child feels about school and if he/she has any school related behavioral problems.

**Legal:** Foster parents should be given initial and ongoing information on the child's legal status and kept informed of all court proceedings.

**Medical:** The health care needs of the child and the available health history of the child must be shared with foster parents. On a regular basis you should provide them with a copy of the foster child's ENHANCE medical summary. You may also share information about the biological parents' health history when the conditions or diseases are believed to be hereditary or may be a factor influencing the child's future health. This history should include any drugs or medication taken by the child's biological mother during pregnancy.

**Mental Health:** If a child has mental health problems or a history of mental health problems, all available information about the child's condition, treatment and current functioning should be shared with foster parents. You may also provide foster parents with mental health information about the biological parents in cases where the condition is a factor affecting their parenting or if the condition is hereditary. Foster parents should be apprised of the parent's involvement and progress in treatment. You should not provide foster parents with a parent's specific diagnosis unless the child is freed for adoption and the foster parents are interested in adopting the child.

**Services:** Foster parents should be invited to all Service Plan Meetings. They are entitled to participate in meetings unless the client specifically requests that they not be present. During these meetings you may freely discuss client issues, outcomes, services and progress. Foster parents are entitled to information regarding substance abuse and mental health issues.