

Resource Caregiver Information Handbook

**Prepared by
State of Hawai‘i
Department of Human Services
Child Welfare Services Division**

**In collaboration with
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Court Improvement Project
EPIC ‘Ohana
Family Programs Hawai‘i
It Takes An ‘Ohana
Partners in Development Foundation**

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Resource Manual can be downloaded at www.familyprogramshi.org. If you do not have access to the computer, contact the Warm Line at NUMBERS for a copy.

Introduction

Aloha and welcome! You are about to make a difference in a child's life. As a resource caregiver, the role you'll be playing in the life of an abused or neglected child may be one of the most rewarding, and at times difficult, experiences you'll ever have. Because of your generosity, children, families, and our communities will be healthier and stronger. **Mahalo!**

The foster care system, which you are joining, is a service provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Welfare Services (CWS) Division. Foster care provides children with temporary, out-of-home care when their family life becomes unsafe because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

You may be unfamiliar with the new title, "resource caregiver." In the past you would have been called a "foster parent." The name change is one reflection of the new direction in CWS systems both locally and across the United States.

The name change is in response to a new law that was passed by the federal government in 2008. Entitled "The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act" (Public law 100-351, the law states that when a child is taken into custody, an active search for the child's family must occur and relatives must be notified within 30 days so the child can be placed with them if they meet the safety criteria. In Hawai'i, during that same year, Act 199 Amended Chapter 581 was also passed. Hawai'i's law legally recognizes hanai relationships as important emotional connections for children and gives a preference for placement to the hanai family.

Both laws recognize the importance of maintaining family connections for the long-term well being of the children. To support those family ties, DHS asks that you not identify yourself as a foster parent but as a resource caregiver, or one who acts as a bridge between children in foster care and their birth family, giving the family the time and support they need to work through their problems. The goal is to keep families together and return the children to their birth family whenever possible. In the best case, you are an important, but temporary, haven of safety for the children while their parents use services to help better themselves and their situation. As a resource caregiver, we ask you to become a valuable member of a team that includes DHS, the guardian ad litem (GAL), the birth family, and other service providers (See Appendix for Our Team Chart).

Children separated from their families and placed in foster care experience a double trauma. First there's the trauma of abuse or neglect, then there's the trauma of being separated from their parents, extended family, and much that's familiar. Because of this double trauma, children placed in your care need extra physical and emotional attention. Being sensitive to the changes and loss they are going through, while giving them guidance and support, can help them through a difficult and confusing time. It also shows them what a caring, attentive, and healthy family is like. For traumatized children, that's an important example and a balm for their battered spirits.

All resource caregivers are carefully chosen by DHS. A desire and ability to provide quality care for vulnerable children is at the heart of the selection process. Cultural, spiritual, and continuity needs of the children are also taken into account. While all licensed resource caregivers meet certification requirements, DHS tries to choose the home that will best meet the needs of each child.

Why Children Need Placement

Children enter into DHS foster care because of the following reasons:

- Parental abuse, incapacity, or neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Danger of abuse or exploitation
- A physical, mental or emotional problem which is beyond the parent's ability to handle without outside assistance
- A crisis or deteriorating family relationships
- A need for assistance in attaining independent living
- An adoption process is underway

How Children Come Into Placement

Entering the foster care system is never easy – for the children or their parents. When the children are unsafe or the family is in trouble, there are two ways children can enter into the system: voluntarily or involuntarily.

Voluntary placement is what it suggests; the parents *voluntarily* work with a social worker to find a home for the children and also to develop a plan for the children's safe return to them. Usually these placements last a few months. During this time, the parents retain legal jurisdiction, and Family Court is not involved.

Involuntary placement is when the parents are unable or unwilling to join with DHS and work on the issues of safety within their family. A Family Court order is issued which gives approval for the children to be placed in a resource home. A plan is developed that outlines what the parents must do to regain custody of their children. Regularly scheduled court hearings monitor the children and parents' progress. If the plan is followed and it appears the children are no longer at risk, they will be returned home.

When an out-of-home placement is necessary, the child's social worker explains the needs and background of the child to another social worker – known as the DHS matcher– who will help match the child with a resource caregiver. The DHS matcher will contact you and talk about the child to see if it will be a good match. If you believe it is, then the DHS matcher will have the child's social worker contact you to talk, in more detail, about the child's history, needs, and the reunification plan. When possible, pre-placement visits with the child are arranged so you can get to know each other and decide if you can live together. If everyone says yes, then arrangements are made to bring the child to your home.

Preparing Your Family

There are many things to consider when preparing for a child to be placed in your home. You may have to make some adjustments to your home to make sure it's safe and appropriate for a child of his/her specific age and needs. Such adjustments may include childproofing your home, preventing access to any dangerous objects, medicines, alcohol, etc., and creating space for the child's privacy. You may want to educate yourself by reading books or attending trainings about specific needs that the children placed in your home may have. It is also important to prepare everyone in your family.

If you have children already in your family, they too should be a part of the decision-making process and preparation. Talking with your children about the effects of the addition to your family and exploring their feelings is essential. As with most new experiences, there's usually a combination of excitement and fear. It's important to listen to your children's fears, concerns, and hopes, knowing this experience will impact them as much as it will impact you. It's beneficial to discuss questions they may have, such as: Why are we doing this? How will things change? Will I have to share a room? Will I finally have a sister? How long will they be staying? How will this affect our family? What if I don't like the child? Let them know that they can always come to you with questions or concerns. It's also important to talk about the needs that the child in foster care may have and how each member can help integrate him or her into the family.

Extended family members, caregivers, and close friends should also be included in discussions about your decision to provide foster care. It would be beneficial to share information that you learned from training with them. Discussions should include why you are doing this, what they can do to help, and what they should and shouldn't talk about with or in front of the child being placed. Also, let them know that, due to confidentiality, you may not be able to share with them everything about the child and his or her history, but that you appreciate their support and understanding.

Family Membership

Children who enter foster care often feel overwhelmed and confused, and are experiencing the heartache of being separated from their family. They need to have a "sense of belonging" in the resource family. Spend extra time, if you can, with your foster child(ren) and get to know them. Find out what their strengths, likes, and dislikes are and encourage them to contribute to the family's conversation and activities. Help them understand the unwritten rules in your home, and give them time to adjust. Try to incorporate some of their family's traditions into yours. For example, if in his/her family Thursday night was pizza and movie night, try to add that to your family's schedule. Showing your child(ren) that they are important and that family life involves give and take on everyone's part will help them feel welcomed.

At the heart of it, a sense of belonging includes being treated like the other children in the home, participating in family activities, sharing household responsibilities, following the house rules, and being loved and valued.

CWS Team Members

Child's Social Worker

The child's social worker is responsible for planning for the child's care and on-going needs. He or she is there to help you. Even if you have experience as a resource caregiver, each child will present his or her own special challenges and rewards. Discussing problems with the social worker as they arise can be easier and more effective than struggling to deal with them on your own.

Social workers will regularly contact your foster child to help with the child's ongoing adjustment. The social workers will also work with the birth parent(s) to evaluate and facilitate reunification.

You should receive the following from the child's social worker either on the day of placement or shortly thereafter:

1. **Agreement Between Resource Caregivers and the Department of Human Services (DHS)**
This is an agreement between DHS and resource caregivers whenever a child is placed in a resource home. It spells out the responsibilities of both parties and is to be signed by the social worker and the resource caregivers.
2. **The Child's Information and Visitation Plan**
This form gives essential information about the child; names and telephone numbers of social workers, including after hours emergency numbers; and rights and plans for visitation by the birth family and other authorized visitors.
3. **Medical Coverage and Information**
 - a. Medical card or coupon for each child
 - b. Any required medication or prescriptions, with instructions
 - c. Plans for current and future medical care
 - d. Medical and dental history, if available

Other items you may receive, as applicable:

1. **Plans for Counseling Services**
2. **Educational Information**
3. **Clothing** (see clothing guide under Children in Foster Care section)

Resource Home Licensing Social Worker (referred to as the licensing social worker)

The licensing social worker is *your* social worker and acts as a liaison to your child's social worker. The licensing worker is available to help you with issues related to your resource home and license. Contact your worker if you have any problems or questions related to licensure of your home or about the rules and regulations related to certification.

After you're licensed, you will be contacted by the licensing social worker at least twice a year as well as when changes are reported. When your certificate is about to expire, your licensing social worker will send you a notice.

Social Service Assistant & Social Service Aide

Social Service Assistant

The Social Service Assistant works directly with the child's social worker and is responsible for issuing ongoing payments for services in relation to the needs of a foster child. They set up foster board payments and manage medical insurance payments and questions. With the social worker's approval, the assistant will also issue payments for items such as clothing allowance vouchers, reimbursements for clothing receipts, mileage reimbursements, DOC payments and respite funds. If you have questions regarding payments or if a payment is late, it is recommended that you contact the assistant directly.

Social Service Aide

The social service aide also works directly with the child's social worker and will be in contact with you. The aide's primary responsibility is to assist with family visits and other transportation needs. The aide will contact you once a visitation schedule has been determined. They will inform you the day and time of visits, as well as their transportation schedule with you. During visits, they may educate birth parents on how to engage appropriately with their children through suggestions and positive role modeling. They usually will supervise and monitor the visit and will report their observations to the child's social worker.

WHO TO CALL...

If you have questions or problems regarding any of the following, here's who to call:	Child's Social Worker	Social Service Assistant	Licensing Social Worker	Other Source
Behavior problems of child	X		X	Therapist, school counselor, DOH CAMHD, other service providers.
Certificate of Approval			X	
Check: late, lost, stolen, or overpayment		X		
Clothing needs of child		X		
Death of child	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 911 (Police) • If after hours call the <i>CAN 24-Hour Reporting Line</i> (832-5300 or 1-800-494-3991 toll free)
Difficulty with birth parents	X			Therapist, GAL, Judge, Request an 'Ohana Conference
Emergency medical care (after hours)	X			911, Emergency Room, Nearest emergency medical facility, DHS Hotline (add number)
Illness or injury of child	X			Regular Doctor as needed
Illness of resource caregiver or other family member	X		X	
MedQuest/Medicaid card		X		
Moving	X		X	ASAP
Payment for emergency shelter homes			X	
People moving in or out of your home, including long term visitors			X	
Psychiatric help needed for child	X			
Request removal of child from your home	X		X	DHS Hotline (Add number). If safety concern, dial 911
Reporting changes in placement			X	
Resources	X	X	X	Warm Line (Add number)
Respite care	X			
Runaway child	X		X	Call 911 (Police)
School problems	X			
Structural changes in your home			X	
Time off needed before accepting another child			X	
Vacations	X		X	
Visits between child and birth family	X			
Worker not available in emergency				Office duty worker or supervisor

Birth Parents

Rights

After the removal of a child from their home, birth parents may have some of their rights suspended while other rights are retained. Below are the rights to be retained unless parental rights are terminated:

1. The right to legal representation in all matters affecting the health and welfare of their child. This includes the right to appeal all court decisions.
2. The right to be included in plans for the child's placement.
3. The right to have their child placed in an environment which is compatible with the child's needs. The religious, cultural and social atmosphere of the child's placement should be consistent with that of the birth parents.
4. The right to have their child maintain his or her own family name, which helps to preserve the child's individual and legal identity and aids in maintaining an emotional tie with the birth parents.
5. The right to scheduled visits with their child unless CWS and/or Family Court determine it is not in the child's best interest.
6. The right to bring about changes in their parenting behavior and to have their child return home when the necessary changes required by the court or DHS have been made.

Birth Parents and Foster Care

An important and often difficult task for resource caregivers is to understand the problems of the birth parents and the circumstances leading to the separation from their children. Being aware of the feelings of children and parents about their separation is also important. For the children's sake, *it is important that birth parents be acknowledged as their real parents*. This allows children and parents to recognize and maintain the emotional bonds that exist between them. For children, their birth family is their claim to identity. Children must have roots or they will wither emotionally.

Trying to understand birth parents without condemning them is extremely important. Your child(ren) in foster care can sense your feelings, especially if they are negative. To be negative and criticizing is to undermine the child(ren)'s feelings of self-worth and his or her relationship with the birth family. Regardless of your feelings towards the birth parents, it is very important for you to be encouraging and continue to help the child(ren) reunite with his or her parents. A supportive attitude can also relieve the pressure on child(ren) in foster care of having to choose one family over the other.

It's beneficial to the child(ren) when you and the birth parents have a positive relationship. Birth parents may initially seem defensive, angry and ill at ease. Often these feelings stem from the parents' own feelings about having someone else care for their child(ren). You can help put the birth parents at ease. Avoid discussing their personal problems or answering questions about future plans for their child(ren). When birth parents want to tell you about their problems and plans, you can listen and encourage them to talk with their social worker.

Children in Foster Care

Basic Rights and Needs of the Child

Family Contact

Every child in foster care has the right to private communication and visits with his or her birth parents or other important people in their life, unless it's unsafe. Through family contact, children in foster care know that their family continues to love them. This can help them cope with the separation from family and their adjustment into a resource home. Family visits should be a part of the child's service plan agreement and never be used as a way to punish either the birth parents or the child. All family correspondence, phone calls and visits need to be arranged with the child's social worker. It is up to the child's social worker to decide if family contact is safe and to make the family visits as positive as possible. If at any time you feel your safety or your foster child's safety is at risk, discuss your concerns with the child's social worker.

Before a visit it's helpful if you, the resource caregiver, contact the birth parents and make plans for the visit. Who will supply the diapers? What food is needed and who will bring it? What are the activities planned? Planning for visits is a way to lessen any tension that may exist, and it also models good parenting to the birth parents. It shows consideration and responsibility; respectfully communicating with the parents gives them the affirming experience of having their involvement count. It also encourages them to be more thoughtful parents.

When it's possible, try to get to know the birth parents. One way is to volunteer to supervise the parent and child's visits, if the court requires supervision. During these visits you can see how the birth parents interact with their child and give them supportive suggestions. This way, you can directly help heal and strengthen their relationship.

It's not uncommon for a child to be upset after a family visit. If the visit was unsupervised you may wonder if the child was abused or hurt in some way. If you notice any unexplained injuries, call the child's social worker. More often, the cause of the child's upset is the pain of separating from his or her parents, yet again. Difficult as it is, the upset is a healthy sign of a strong attachment. Respecting that bond and comforting the child will help him or her move through the intense feelings and regain balance. Increasing the number of family visits may also be needed. If you're not sure of the cause of the upset, check in with the child's therapist or support team.

Sibling connections are important and DHS tries to keep siblings in foster care together as much as possible, but sometimes brothers and sisters are placed in different homes. There are agencies that help siblings in foster care stay in touch by providing transportation and arranging visits. Including siblings in your family's day at the beach or inviting them over for a movie night can also be a way to strengthen their family ties.

It's important to remember that a child who is in foster care cannot be taken out of the resource home by their parents or other relatives without the permission of the child's social worker. If the parents or relatives arrive without notice or act inappropriately, you have the right to deny them visitation. You should always tell the child's social worker if that happens.

Reunification

While it's the goal of DHS to keep families together, it's important that you, as a resource caregiver, are also committed to that goal and willing to help the birth parents. Sometimes that's a tall order. Strong negative feelings towards the parents can well up when you think of the abuse. Feeling protective, you may want to limit their involvement. There may also be cultural differences or a level of parenting skills that make you uncomfortable. You may think your child in foster care would be better off without "such a family," even if you don't outwardly admit it.

Most parents, even those found guilty of abuse or neglect, are deeply attached to their children and want them to have a good life. Unfortunately, they may not have the capacity or ability to give them that life. They may have experienced abuse or neglect when they were young and are replaying that pain with their children, or substance abuse is consuming their energy and attention. Physical or mental illness may also play a part in their diminished capacity to parent their children.

For some parents, having their children enter foster care is hitting rock bottom and the wakeup call they need to refocus their lives. This won't make them great parents instantly, but it starts them on a course to rebuild their family. Fortunately, children don't need perfect parents, they need parents who love them, provide for them, guide them, encourage them, and discipline them without crossing the line of abuse. Your support can help them become capable parents.

The bond between a child and parent is primal and tethers the child to his or her history and cultural identity. Cutting that bond should never be done lightly or without efforts to mend it. But there are times when the parents are not able to provide a safe environment and their parental rights are terminated. These children are taken into permanent custody by DHS and other care arrangements, such as adoption or legal guardianship, are pursued. The children may or may not be placed with extended family.

Family Connections

For children in foster care, maintaining connections with immediate and extended family can be very beneficial in lessening the amount of loss in the children's lives. DHS has contracted outside agencies to help with the "family finding" process.

Typically, a team of service providers, lead by a family finding specialist, will work to support the youth, families, and resource caregivers throughout the process.

Children in foster care, especially if they are older youth, often want help finding their biological family. While ultimately reconnecting with family is usually positive, initially it can be a bumpy ride for the youth and the resource caregivers. Typically, these youth have secretly longed for their families and have had fantasies about reunification. When family is finally found, a child's intense feelings of excitement, anger, insecurity, and joy can be hard to manage. The youth may become preoccupied with the birth family and treat the resource family (and their rules) as if they don't matter. It's as if the youth is smitten, and the familiar, stable relationships within the resource family aren't nearly as compelling. As a resource caregiver, you may feel threatened and devalued. Turning to the youth's social worker and the team of agency caregivers for support can help everyone through this transition.

Once the newness wears off and family contact becomes ordinary, the youth usually settles down. Then the challenge for the youth will be how to navigate multiple important relationships. Will he or she go live with family or stay with you and find ways to maintain contact with the aunts, uncles, and cousins? If the youth lives with family, will he or she keep in contact with you? It can take time to decide.

As a resource caregiver, riding through that rocky phase with your children in foster care is a true gift. It allows the children to have both a past and present, even when they don't yet know how to integrate the two.

Religion

Religion can give meaning and guidance to our lives and support us through some of our darkest moments. It is also a cultural and social practice, and is part of many families' rituals and celebrations.

Every child in foster care has a right to attend religious services of his or her own faith or that of his or her parents. It is also important that they are supported in observing their religious holidays.

A child in foster care may be included in the religious activities of the resource caregivers. If the child is not comfortable participating in your family's church activities, he or she has the right to not attend. In these instances, you would need to make other arrangements for the child. The child's social worker must also be consulted before a child in foster care is presented for christening, baptism, confirmation or other religious ceremonies.

Discipline and Setting Limits

Discipline and setting limits are essential parts of caring for children. When used positively, they can help children grow and develop, learn positive behaviors, and ultimately be better prepared for adulthood. Therefore, discipline methods should be based on what will help the child grow and learn and not by the caregiver's moods, needs, or feelings of frustration.

Although different families and cultures have their own ways of parenting and disciplining children, there are several important things that resource caregivers must keep in mind. Children who have been mistreated and removed from their birth families generally lack trust in other people. They may have poor self-esteem or feel unworthy of love due to their experience of rejection and abandonment. They also may feel guilty because they blame themselves for what has happened to them. Because of this, even when disciplining and setting limits, you should try to nurture your relationship with your child in foster care as this may also help to increase their self-esteem.

To increase a child's trust and self-esteem it is important to NOT ENGAGE IN THE FOLLOWING FORMS OF DISCIPLINE: spanking, hitting, shaking, binding, closeting, isolation, cursing, threatening, denial of meals, humiliation, and making derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family. It is also unacceptable to threaten the child with punishment by a deity, subject a child to any form of punishment by other children, threaten to deprive a child of visits with her or his birth family or others or use the social worker as a threat. **AT NO TIME IS PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT ACCEPTABLE.**

Also, even though it is good to have a general sense of equality within the home, you may need to adjust your expectations for each child and his or her situation or needs. It's important to consider what age the child is socially, emotionally, intellectually, or according to life experiences, which may differ from his or her chronological age. For example, your foster child may be 7

years old, but may act more like a 4-year old. As a resource caregiver you should not expect him to act the same as your 7-year old biological child. That expectation may not be realistic and could be frustrating for everyone in the family.

When you have questions, ask the child's social worker or therapist. They will be available to discuss age appropriate behavior and discipline strategies. Ongoing trainings and support groups are other resources that will help improve your skills. Inappropriate discipline will result in the removal of the child from your home.

It is difficult for children to come into a new home with new rules and expectations. It's very important to help them understand your house rules, their responsibilities, your expectations of them, and what the limits are on their behavior. The following guidelines may be helpful.

1. **Be specific when correcting a child's behavior.** For example, if a child is kicking a ball inside the house, instead of saying, "Stop that" say, "We don't play ball inside the house. If you want to, you can play with the ball in the yard."
2. **Give the child options.** For example, when you want her to take out the rubbish, ask if she wants to do it now or after dinner. However, make sure when you give them options, you are okay with whatever they decide.
3. **Let the child know that they are acceptable and good, even though their behavior or choice might not be.** You might say, "You are a smart boy, but that choice wasn't a smart one."
4. **Encourage behavior you wish the child to continue and be specific.** Catch her being good and bring attention to it. For example, if she brushes her teeth after asking her once, say, "Wow! You listened to me quickly, and your teeth look so shiny!" Using rewards, earning of special privileges, and/or charts may also help.
5. **If consequences are needed,** use such things as brief time-outs to settle down (for as many minutes as the child's age), withhold privileges for short time periods (such as TV viewing or electronics), have them make restitution (making things right, such as, writing a letter of apology or returning something stolen), or adjusting their schedule (such as an earlier curfew or bedtime so they will wake up on time).

It is important to be understanding and patient with the children in your home, especially while they adjust to living with a new family. It is also important to try to learn and understand what is going on and not take things personally. Instead of getting upset about such things as bedwetting, hoarding food, stealing, and lying, try to understand the reason behind it, and make sure to ask others for help.

Special Needs

Your child in foster care may have special emotional, physical, or educational needs above and beyond normal care that must be addressed through coordination with the child's social worker and respective resources. Such services and/or activities, which may be intensive, are intended to enhance appropriate development and help your child lead a happier, healthy life.

If you have concerns that the needs of the child are not being addressed, it is important to share your concerns with the child's social worker and appropriate professionals.

(Refer to Resource Caregiver- Difficulty of Care Payment section.)

Therapy for Children in Care

Often children in foster care need counseling or therapy to help them with their past traumatic experiences, the loss of their family, their feelings, and reactive behaviors. If you think therapy is necessary, talk to your child's social worker. The social worker may refer the child to a specialist or may ask you to find a therapist. Make sure the therapist is skilled in addressing the child's needs and accepts the child's type of medical insurance. Never pay for sessions out of pocket because you will not be reimbursed.

Sometimes children may see a therapist by themselves or with biological family members. If a child's behavior or your relationship to the child is of concern, you may want to be included in part of the child's session. For example, you may see the therapist alone for the first part, then the child sees him or her alone, and towards the end both of you see the therapist together.

Education

One of the most important roles as a resource caregiver is to help your child in foster care succeed in getting a good education. Whenever possible, try to keep the child in their current school since research shows it takes 3-4 months for the child to catch up academically with every school change. –Tracy will add a part that talks about Fostering Connections Law: Children who come into care have the right to stay in their school and community. If the child does not stay it has to be because it is the child's best interest. Travel and transportation is an issue but that can't affect the decision. Safety, there have been incidents where the safety of the resource caregivers has been threatened, so there may be times when it is everyone's best for the child to move schools. The law states that DOE and DHS have to look at what is in the best interests of child.

For very young learners, learning to read and write starts at home. **Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building success in reading.** Structured homework time is crucial. If you have an older youth, you can help motivate them by sharing the many higher education benefits and scholarships available to them.

If your child has extra educational or emotional needs, additional school-based services may be available. Talk to your child's teachers or social worker about your questions or concerns. Resources ?

Educational Surrogate Parent – ask Lynn to review this

An Educational Surrogate Parent is a person who acts in the place of the legal parent to make decisions about a child's education when a child is eligible for special educational services.

A surrogate parent is assigned by the Department of Education (DOE) when the birth parents are not able/willing to participate and the child is under state custody (this could be temporary, foster, or permanent custody). A surrogate parent is assigned to a child within 30 days after the school's determination and will stay with this child as long as the child is in the foster care system.

Please remember:

- The child's social worker must remain informed about the child's progress in school, grade placement, and school activities that may be in conflict with the birth family's culture or religious beliefs.
- You should list your child's social worker as an emergency contact person at the school of your child in foster care.
- If the child leaves your home, all their school related paperwork (i.e., report cards, Individual Educational Program (IEP) plan) must be given to the child's social worker. This will help provide continuity in the child's educational experience.

Lynn's Response:

A surrogate parent is a person who acts in place of the legal parent to make decisions about the child's education in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

A surrogate parent is requested by the Department of Education (DOE) and assigned by the surrogate parent provider. A request for a surrogate parent is made when:

- No parent can be identified,
- After reasonable efforts the DOE cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent; or
- The student is a child in the temporary, foster or permanent custody of the Department of Human Services.

A surrogate parent is assigned to a child within 30 days after the school determines that a child needs a surrogate parent and will stay with the child as long as a state agency retains foster or permanent custody of the child.

Please remember:

- The child's social worker must remain informed about the child's progress in school, grade placement, and school activities that may be in conflict with the birth family's culture or religious beliefs.

- You should list your child's social worker as an emergency contact person at the school of your child in foster care.
- If the child leaves your home, all their school related paperwork (i.e. report cards, Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan, 504 plan) must be given to the child's social worker. This will help provide continuity in the child's educational experience.

Consents

Educational

Resource caregivers are authorized to provide consent and information, as well as acknowledge receipt of information on behalf of DHS, for routine educational and recreational activities consistent with the DHS' plans for children in foster care under its custody. Intramural and extramural activities (i.e., sports activities and off island trips) are not considered routine at this time because of concerns with possible injury to the child in foster care and liability issues. Consent forms for these activities must be signed by the child's social worker. The child's social worker is also the one who should enroll the child in school.

The DOE and DHS agree that the following are examples of routine activities:

1. Report cards, absent or tardy excuses, discipline notices (i.e., suspension,), registration materials, course selection, grade level adjustments, retention notices and permission to be placed in optional educational programs such as Gifted and Talented, Pregnant Teen Program, Primary School Adjustment Program, graduation notices and announcements;
2. Parent meetings, conference notices, permission to participate in field trips, fundraising, and co-curricular activities (clubs, band, dances);
3. Request to dispense prescription medication by the school's nurse, free and reduced lunch programs, bus transportation program subsidy;
4. Permission to participate in classes such as sex education.

Other

- **Sleepovers** - If the child will be out of your home for over 24 hours, you will need to get prior approval from the child's social worker.
- **Library Cards** – When applying for a library card, have the child's SW sign the application as their guardian.
- **Haircutting** - Contact your child's social worker before making any changes to his/her hair.
- **Driver's License for Permanent Custody Foster Youth** – A youth whom DHS has permanent custody and who is qualified may apply for a driver's license. DHS will need to sign the driver's license application that can be obtained through the child's social worker. Consult with your auto insurance agency regarding appropriate coverage and liability issues before you allow a foster youth to drive your car.
- **Birth Control** – Contact your child's social worker to discuss options.
- **Tattoos/Piercings** - As a resource caregiver, you are not authorized to give consent. If your child in foster care comes home with a tattoo/piercing, inform his/her social worker.
- **Media** - As a resource caregiver, you may not consent to releasing photographs, videos, and identifying information of your child in foster care.
- **Medical Care** – You are authorized to consent to routine medical and dental care (i.e., non-surgical treatments, immunizations, TB clearances, etc.)

Health Care

Every child in foster care must receive adequate care and treatment for physical, emotional, dental and visual needs. If possible, children should continue seeing their current doctor. Whenever a child is placed within a new home, a physical examination is required within 48 hours prior to or 24 hours following the placement. An annual physical examination of your foster child is also required. Your foster child should also be taken for routine dental checkups and cleanings.

Children in foster care receive medical coverage through MedQuest. If a child also has medical coverage through his or her parents (e.g., HMSA, Kaiser, or a military dependent's plan), resource caregivers are expected to use the child's available

medical plan. You will receive medical and dental identification cards for the child. The appropriate card must be presented each time the child sees a doctor or dentist, needs a prescription filled, or enters a hospital. If you do not receive the medical and/or dental card, contact the child's social worker or social service assistant. **Do not pay for any medical or dental services. You will not be reimbursed.**

Inform the child's social worker of all major illnesses and injuries. Keep a record of all doctor and dental visits including all medical conditions and outcomes regardless of the severity. All medical and dental reports must become part of a child's record, which will accompany them if their placement changes.

If you have any questions pertaining to the child's medical care, check with the child's social worker.

Nutrition

Food and nutrition are important in the daily care of children in foster care. It's important to provide regular, balanced meals and snacks. A diet that respects the child's cultural, ethnic and religious preferences can be a fun way to learn more about your foster child's culture. Ask the child's birth family if you don't know how to prepare these foods, or do a research project with your foster child on the internet. Also, find out about any existing food allergies or dietary needs and plan meals accordingly. Set aside healthy snacks that can be eaten when hungry between meals. Never force-feed, coerce a child to eat, or use food to control or punish your foster child. Except for medical reasons, never deny a meal to your child.

The USDA, MyPyramid.gov, website contains a wealth of information regarding proper nutrition guidelines.

Eating Disorders

Some children may have eating problems, such as hoarding food, refusing to eat, over eating or bingeing and purging. Some of these problems are signs of deeper psychological issues and are related to earlier experiences of abuse and neglect. Talk to your child's social worker if your child shows signs of these behaviors. It's important that these symptoms get addressed.

Clothing and Personal Essentials

It is important that children in foster care have appropriate clothing and are provided with the basic necessities so they do not feel inadequate or embarrassed. The dignity and self-esteem of the child should always be preserved and enhanced.

All children in foster care placement are eligible to receive an annual clothing allowance of \$600.00.

Resource caregivers will be able to purchase diapers, school uniforms, shoes, etc., with this clothing allowance. Resource caregivers may also request an additional \$125.00 for special circumstances or events, such as proms and sports uniforms for children in your care.

The annual clothing allowance of \$600 will be provided:

- To resource caregivers for the child in their care;
- During the state fiscal year - July 1st to June 30th;
- Twice a year at \$300 each – at the beginning of the school year (July/August), and in January/February;
- For new placements on a prorated basis.

There are four different ways the a Resource Caregiver can receive the clothing allowance for a child in your care. Your child's social worker can help you determine which method of payment would be best for you and the child. The payment methods include:

1. A purchase order to a vendor.
2. Purchase of clothing by a CWS staff through a state credit card.
3. Reimbursement of clothing expenses after the resource caregiver purchases the clothes with their own funds and submits the original receipts for reimbursement.
4. Issuance of the clothing allowance check to the resource caregiver in advance of the purchase. Resource caregivers must submit receipts to the child's worker to reconcile the clothing purchases and the payment that was issued.

Resource Caregivers can contact their child's social worker or their licensing worker if they have questions about the clothing allowance for a foster child or youth placed in their home.

The following is a basic clothing guide for children in foster care:

INFANTS (newborn – 1 year)		BOYS (ages 6 and above)	
Suggested Item	Quantity	Suggested Item	Quantity
Sleeper / Stretch suit	6	Shorts / Pants / Jeans	6
T-shirts	6	Shirts	6
Dress outfit	2	Jacket / Sweater	1
Jacket / Sweater	1	Underwear	7
Shorts / Pants	4	Sleepwear	2
Booties / Mittens	4	Swim trunks	1
Shoes	1	Slippers	1
Socks (pairs)	3	Dress shoes	1
		Sneakers	1
		Socks (pairs)	6
		Belt	1
		Rain poncho & rubber boots	1
TODDLER (ages 1-5 years)		GIRLS (ages 6 and above)	
Suggested Item	Quantity	Suggested Item	Quantity
Shorts / Pants	6	Dress / Skirt / Muumuu	6
Underwear	7	Shorts / Slacks / Jeans	5-6
Shirt / Blouse	6	Blouses / Shirts	5
Jacket / Sweater	1	Sweater / Jacket	1
Pajamas / Nighties	4	Panties	7
Dress outfit	2	Bras	4-6
Swim suit	1	Slips	2
Slippers	1	Sleepwear	2
Sandals	1	Swim suit	1
Sneakers	1	Slippers	1
Socks (pairs)	3	Dress shoes / Sandals	1
Rain poncho & Rubber boots	1	Sneakers	1
		Socks (pairs)	6
		Belt	1
		Rain poncho & Rubber boots	1

Recreation and Social Activities



Children in foster care need encouragement and opportunities to use their leisure time in constructive recreational and social experiences appropriate to their age. Developing friendships can be challenging for a child who has changed schools and neighborhoods.

Supporting your child's participation in group activities during school, after school, and in the community can help him or her adjust to the new surroundings and develop new friendships. As a resource caregiver, you may give consent for your child to engage in routine social activities, such as spending time with friends and dating privileges. Use the same caution and discretion in these decisions as you would with your birth children. Permission slips for school field trips, routine educational and recreational needs, and activities may be signed by you, but it's best to check the "Consent" section in this handbook for specific guidelines or talk to your child's social worker.

The cost of recreation or social activities falls under the foster board payment, but you may check with the child's social worker or GAL for other available funding if needed (see Reimbursements and Financial Waivers section for more information).

Benefits Gained From Child's Involvement in Extra Curricular Activities:

- Improved self-esteem
- Improved physical and mental health
- Re-directed energy
- Improved social skills
- Less likely to become addicted to bad habits
- Looks good on a resume or job application
- Helps with planning specific goals

Television/Movies/Video Games



Children today are bombarded with information; some of it is of questionable value or may not be age appropriate. It's important to monitor and limit your child's television, movies, video games, and internet viewing. Select television programs or movies, video games, internet sites or other media carefully for younger children and help older children choose those that are suitable for their age. Blocking features are available on your cable/digital box and certain television sets to minimize or control your child's access to certain channels, Pay-Per-View, movies or television shows of a particular rating,. Instructions to set blocking features on your cable/digital box may vary, so please check with your cable or satellite television provider for more information or review the manual for your television set.

Internet

The internet opens a wide range of exploration and learning for children. However, it can also pose a danger. There are people who prey on children and attempt to sexually exploit or abuse them through internet chat lines/rooms. These people entice minors with affection, kindness, and even gifts to gain their trust. They slowly add sexual content into their chat line conversations and may attempt to set up a meeting with your child. Closely monitor and set up rules and appropriate parental control features regarding internet chat lines, instant messaging, e-mails, etc. Inform your child's social worker if you suspect or have evidence that your child is involved in inappropriate internet use. If there is an imminent danger, call the police immediately.

For more information on risk indicators and what you can do to minimize your child's vulnerability, contact the internet crime unit at your local police department.

Cell Phones

A cell phone in the hands of a child can provide safety, flexibility and enhanced communication, but it can also pose potential risks and consequences. As cell phone technology advances and adds enhanced features, there are more reasons for parents to become wary of what their children are receiving on their phones and who they are communicating with. One example is the dangerous trend in teenage flirting called "sexting," which involves the sending of sexually explicit photos or text via cell phone. Monitor and supervise your child's cell phone use as much as possible. Talk to your foster child about appropriate and inappropriate cell phone use, and set rules to minimize risks. Various cell phone providers offer software which allows monitoring of cell phone activity. If you encounter or suspect that your foster child is inappropriately using his or her cell phone, contact your child's social worker and/or team members.



Sexuality

Adolescents go through many different obstacles and changes. Along with trying to fit in at home and school, they are often trying to understand themselves, including their sexuality and/or sexual orientation. It is vital for you, as a resource caregiver, to be understanding and supportive if your adolescent foster child identifies as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender youth, or may be questioning his or her sexuality. Home should be a safe place for everyone regardless of sexual preference. There's a lot of good information and community resources to help you and your family successfully guide your adolescent through this time in their lives. If you need assistance, please contact your child's social worker or GAL.

For foster children who enter care because they were sexually abused, developing a healthy sexual sense of self is challenging. He or she may be highly sexualized and act in ways that aren't age appropriate. Sexual boundaries or respecting the boundaries of others wasn't taught nor modeled, so your child may not understand the inappropriateness of sexually provocative behavior. Your child was sexually exploited, so he or she may repeat that pattern and enter into relationships that aren't in his or her best interest. As a resource caregiver, it's important to understand the special challenges your youth is facing and seek help for yourself and the youth from their social worker and therapeutic team.

Resource Caregivers

Resource caregivers are special people who assume responsibility for the care of a foster child. As we've said before, this is a difficult and complex task which involves the foster child, the birth parents, the resource caregiver's family, DHS, the GAL and other service providers.

Becoming a resource caregiver means joining a team of service providers. This can be exciting, rewarding, and challenging. You'll be exposed to new ideas about parenting, medical and psychological services, legal proceedings, and supportive services, to name just a few. While many of these ideas may be compatible with your views and ways of doing things, some ideas and expectations may be harder to absorb. For example, giving more positive than negative feedback to your foster child might feel strange, if pointing out mistakes and suggesting other behavior has been your typical parenting style. Learning new parenting techniques to increase your effectiveness with a traumatized child is just one area of growth that lies ahead.

Another area of growth is adjusting to the role and expectations of DHS. As a parent, you're used to being in full charge of your household and family. Your foster child, however, is ultimately the responsibility of DHS. Because of that, there are rules and guidelines that need to be followed.

The child's social worker and the licensing social worker will work cooperatively and respectfully with you, but learning to accept the supervision of a social worker in planning for a child can be challenging at times. That's normal. Finding support from other resource caregivers, service providers, or your social worker can help you through those times when you struggle with the department's requirements. Feel free to ask questions so you can understand the reason or purpose of the requirements. Chances are, the rules or guidelines were put into place as corrective measures to problems that occurred in the past. DHS, like any vital organization, is continually growing and changing too.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Resource Caregiver

It's the resource caregiver's responsibility to nurture their foster child, however the resource caregiver also has several clearly defined rights: the right to receive help, to be informed, to understand, to choose, and to a grievance procedure.

Consultative and supportive services are available to the resource caregiver as requested and as needed. DHS expects that its staff will respond to all requests for help on a timely basis and that resource caregivers will be treated with courtesy, dignity and consideration.

Right to Receive Help...	Corresponding Responsibility
From the child's social worker in preparing the child for placement.	To adequately prepare for each child referred to your home and to welcome the child as a member of your family.

When you have concerns about the child or problems related to the placement.	To notify the child's social worker and/or licensing social worker when a problem <i>starts</i> to develop.
When emergencies occur after office hours, on weekends and on holidays.	To know how to reach an agency representative and to promptly notify the agency when an emergency occurs. See Emergency Section on pg. _____ for more info. Ck on this
In correcting a situation when there has been an error or delay in any reimbursements and/or payments.	To notify the child's social worker and/or social service aide when a payment problem develops.
From the child's social worker in arranging visits with the birth family.	To cooperate with the child's social worker's plans for such visits.
From the child's social worker in obtaining timely medical & dental insurance information and medical & dental care for the child in foster care.	To insure that the child in foster care receives essential medical & dental care in a timely manner.
By getting advance notice of requirements for certification renewal.	To complete all requirements for recertification, for the licensing worker, on time.
From the child's social worker in preparing the child for removal from your home.	To support a child's social worker's decision to remove the child and to notify your licensing social worker when the child leaves your home.
Right to Be Informed...	Corresponding Responsibility
About the child's medical information and relevant social history, when this information is available, within 30 days of placement.	To maintain confidentiality of information shared with you by the worker(s) and to share with the worker(s) information about the child's behavior and health, reporting promptly any significant changes in either.
About known aggressive or dangerous behaviors of the child being placed and to receive all available information from the child's social worker which may affect your decision to accept a child.	To ask the child's social worker about this information when each child is placed in your home.
By the child's social worker regarding the services you are expected to provide.	To provide needed services and to help the child's social worker identify the need for additional services as they develop; to keep the child's social worker informed regarding the child's progress and any problems.
Regarding plans for the birth parents' visits.	To respect the birth parents' need and right to visit and maintain contact with the child.
About needed resources and how to use them.	To make appropriate use of medical, dental, psychiatric, educational, and recreational resources as needed and recommended and, to provide transportation.
About foster board and/or other payments and in what amount and when the payments will be received.	To notify the social service aide and/or the child's social worker of unusual delays or errors in payments and about changes in the situation that affects payments.
About resources for increasing your skills in being a resource caregiver (orientation, adult education classes, workshops, in-service training, etc.)	To use these resources for expanding your skills and knowledge.
About the evaluation of your home and recommendations made for any improvement needed in the care you are providing.	To use the evaluation constructively to make necessary changes to your home, to increase your skills and to develop new ones.
About changes in DHS policy, regulations and procedures.	To understand and comply with these changes.
About the certification regulations and standards for being a resource caregiver.	To understand and comply with the regulations and the standards for resource caregivers.
About plans to remove a child in foster care and, to be given 14 days advance notice whenever possible.	To support plans to remove a child as well as to provide the agency with sufficient notice when you request a child to be removed.
In writing, about the child's court hearing dates and the option to participate.	To report on the child's progress to the child's social worker, GAL and/or the court (see Hawai'i Caregivers and the Court Guide and/or the DHS website for more info).

Right to Understand...	Corresponding Responsibility
The role of the resource caregiver, birth parent and all agency staff with whom you come into contact.	To meet agency expectations of resource caregivers for foster care.
Policies and procedures of the agency relating to your role as a resource caregiver.	To comply with these policies and procedures.
Your right as a team member to share in planning for your child in foster care and to receive a copy of the Service Plan and Agreement.	To understand and support the Service Plan's goals.
Right to Choose...	Corresponding Responsibility
Whether or not you accept a child for placement in your home.	To consider your capacity to cope with the child in foster care before you agree to the placement, and only accept referrals made by DHS. If you accept the referral, be sure to notify your licensing social worker.
A time that is convenient for you, as well as the child's parent(s), for scheduled visits.	To facilitate arrangements for such visits.
Right to a Grievance Procedure...	Corresponding Responsibility
When your application for a certificate of approval has been denied or revoked.	<p>To follow the procedure for an appeal as outlined below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit the appeal in writing to the Department of Human Services within 90 days following receipt of the notice. 2. Within 15 days of receiving the written appeal, the Department will send the resource caregivers a letter of acknowledgement that will outline the steps to be taken toward a hearing. 3. If all the steps are completed, a hearing will be held with a designated representative presiding. 4. If all paperwork is submitted within a timely manner, resource caregivers will receive the decision in writing within 90 days from the date of the initial request.

Confidentiality

The child's social worker will share information with you to help you understand the child and to explain why he or she must live away from his or her family. This information is confidential. Relatives, neighbors and friends are often curious about a child in foster care. It is not always easy to answer such questions about the child and the biological family without violating trust. However, the child's family affairs and future plans are personal matters and should not be discussed. Be mindful and considerate of the privacy of a child's information (i.e., pre-placement exam, child information folder, etc.). Please keep this information in a safe area that is not easily accessible to others.

Questions may arise from professionals working with the child, i.e., teachers and doctors. Please clarify the boundaries of confidentiality with the child's social worker before any information is shared.

Court Hearings

As a resource caregiver, you are encouraged to attend court hearings and/or write a report to the court. You have important information for the court to hear and a unique perspective of the child's needs. By giving the Family Court current and detailed information about the child, you can assist the court in making the best possible decisions about the child in your home. When you share information, try to focus on giving firsthand information about the child and not offer opinions about other people involved. You have the right to be notified in writing and to participate in all court hearings about the child in your home.

If you are employed by the State of Hawaii, you may be granted administrative leave to attend Family Court hearings regarding the child in your care. For more information, resource caregivers should contact their supervisors at work.

Youth over the age of fourteen are also welcomed to participate in their court hearings and are encouraged to attend (except when the court determines otherwise). The youth's guardian ad litem (GAL) will notify you and the youth about the hearing, and DHS is generally responsible for providing transportation for the child to attend. You should report any concerns you have about the effects court participation will have on the youth to the GAL. It is also important to discuss with the GAL, the social worker, and the court staff how they can help the child feel comfortable in the courtroom. Although the child's GAL and social worker are responsible for preparing the child for court and for talking with him or her afterward, you can be a great resource of support.

For more information, see "Caregivers and the Court: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Families."

Resource Caregiver Training

Being a resource caregiver is a demanding role. To be effective, you will need to remain open and receptive to new ideas. Ongoing trainings are available to help you grow and develop. In addition to the required licensing training, you are encouraged to attend trainings, workshops and conferences provided by the DHS Staff Development Office and other community organizations. These opportunities are intended to assist you and other resource caregivers to provide quality care and cover a range of topics such as child development, cultural considerations, behavioral interventions, etc. You will be notified of these events and may be required to pre-register in order to attend.

Respite and Child Care

On occasion, you will need to arrange child care for your children in foster care. If possible, it's best to have the care provided in your home. The monthly foster board payment is meant to cover babysitting expenses incurred by resource caregivers for their recreational purposes.

Under times of stress or extraordinary need, there may be respite care funds available to help you with temporary, short-term relief. In order to see if you are eligible for these funds, you must first make a request through the child's social worker who will assess the situation and make a determination. If these funds are approved, you will need to find another adult to watch your children in foster care, and DHS will reimburse you.

Additional funds for preschool and ongoing childcare needs may be available through community programs and agencies.

If you are planning to be away from your home for longer than 24 hours, you must inform the child's social worker in advance. As each situation can vary, it is important that the plan be discussed with the child's social worker or supervisor.

Vacations

As a resource caregiver, you are encouraged to include your children in foster care in your vacation and travel plans when possible, but you will need to discuss these plans with the child's social worker as early as possible. In most instances, the child's birth parent or the court will need to give consent.

It is recommended that you bring important telephone numbers, a copy of the child's medical card, a copy of your substitute caretaker agreement, and a copy of the court order (if available). Before you leave, please contact your social worker as they may recommend other documents specific to your child.

Outside funding may be available to reimburse you for some of the travel expenses for your foster child. Check with your child's social worker.

If the child is not able to travel with you, arrangements for child care should be discussed with the child's social worker.

Certification/Licensing of Resource Homes

Hawai'i law requires that every resource home have a certificate of approval in order to care for children. There is no charge for the certificate of approval. It will be issued to you when your home is approved according to DHS standards. If there are changes in your circumstances, you must immediately notify your licensing worker so your new home or situation can be assessed to ensure that these standards are met. The certificate is renewable as long as certification requirements are met.

When to contact your licensing worker:

- If there is a change in the residents in your home
- If a household member will be turning 18
- If you have a change of address or phone number
- If you are planning to go on vacation
- If a child in foster care moves in or out of your home
- If you have medical problems that will affect your ability to care for children
- If you have a change in your employment/finances
- If there is a change in the criminal history of you or your household members
- If you have questions or need someone to consult with

Recertification of Your Home

Prior to your license expiring, you will be notified by your licensing worker of the recertification process. Recertification entails a reassessment of your home: the physical requirements, quality of child care, family situation, relationships with members of the child's team, TB clearances when requested and criminal history clearances. If there is some indication of a health problem, the worker may request a current medical report.

Liability Insurance

DHS provides all licensed resource caregivers with limited liability insurance coverage. For specific information on the coverage and exclusions, please refer to the Insurance Policy Highlights Brochure. You can also request a current copy of the insurance policy from the licensing unit. You may want to consider purchasing additional homeowner's or renter's insurance. If you have specific questions, please contact your licensing worker/unit.

Foster Board Payments

Resource caregivers receive a standard board payment each month for the care of children placed by DHS in their homes. The payment received at the beginning of the month is for the prior month's care. If the child is in your home for less than a month, the board rate is prorated. Board payments cover the following:

1. Food, including lunches and milk;
2. Shelter and utilities;
3. Use of household furnishing and equipment;
4. Expenses involved in household operations;
5. Personal essentials, including, but not limited to, toothbrush, soap, brush/comb, haircuts, hygienic supplies, and contact lens supplies;
6. Reading and educational materials/supplies;
7. Recreational and community activities for the child, such as parties, picnics, movies, and excursions;
8. Transportation expense when you shop for the child in foster care, drive the child to school events or other recreational activities;
9. Medicine chest supplies or first aid materials such as band-aids, aspirin, cough syrup, bandages, and antiseptics;
10. Allowance according to the age of the child;
The issue of responsibility with money is an important one in child rearing. Whether to give or not to give a child in foster care an allowance is a question that you will need to determine. What works best for your family is the answer for you.
11. Babysitting expense incurred by resource caregivers for their own recreational purposes; and
12. Other requirements for infant and toddler care including two basic sub-items:
 - A. Baby supplies, including diapers, and nutritional supplements recommended by the physician for the care of infants and toddlers;

- B. Increased costs for utilities, household furnishing, and maintenance operations related to increased activities, such as, laundering and formula preparation.

Overpayments

When a child leaves a resource home, the foster board payment will be adjusted. If an overpayment has been made, you will receive a letter from DHS stating the amount to be repaid. Resource caregivers will be responsible for reimbursing DHS for the overpayment.

Reimbursements & Financial Waivers

In addition to the board rate, if applicable, DHS shall provide for the following:*

1. A purchase order or reimbursement for clothing up to a limited amount per year, depending on the child's age. Contact the child's social service aide or social worker before purchasing any clothing for reimbursement. The social worker may also request clothing from the child's parents. (See suggested list of clothing items on page _____ in Foster Children section).
2. Mileage at the current rate of state reimbursement or bus fare for transportation to and from school when free school transportation is not available; transportation to and from the child's medical and therapy appointments; and for resource caregivers to attend meetings authorized by DHS (See Sample Mileage Form in Appendix).
3. Medical treatment, medications or supplies related to the physical condition of the child in foster care (such as medicated shampoo for head lice) may be issued to resource caregivers.
4. Respite care, when eligible (See page _____ for more information).
5. Reimbursement for group activity fees such as soccer or baseball.
6. Reimbursement for sports uniforms and assistance on purchasing clothing for proms, etc. per year.
7. Tuition waivers for City and County Summer Fun programs are available for those who apply.
8. Summer school tuition waivers (summer school waivers are based on available funding).
9. Bus passes may be requested through the child's SW when free school transportation is not available.
10. Free school lunches. Check with the school for the application.

***Contact your child's SW or SSA prior to purchasing any items if seeking reimbursement.**

Difficulty of Care Payment

Resource caregivers may receive difficulty of care payments for children certified by a professional as requiring "beyond ordinary care." As stated in the Hawai'i Administrative Rules §17-1617-3, "Difficulty of care" is a payment provided in accordance with departmental procedures, in addition to the basic board rate, for a child who requires more care and supervision as documented by a treating professional because of the child's physical, emotional, psychological, and/or behavioral needs, or as documented by appropriate school personnel when the child requires academic or educational assistance that is over and above the average assistance needed for a child." If it is determined that your child is eligible for difficulty of care payment, your child's social worker will discuss payment rates with you and conduct periodic reviews to assess continued eligibility.

Taxation

(Written in part, reviewed and approved by the Internal Revenue Service, Honolulu, Hawai'i)

Certain foster care payments are excludable (non-taxable) from gross income. For the payments to be considered non-taxable, they must be paid to reimburse the resource caregiver for the expenses of caring for an eligible child in foster care in the resource caregiver's home or be considered a "difficulty of care payment." If an individual is paid to maintain space in his or her home for on-call resource homes, then such payments must be included in the individual's income.

Resource caregivers may be able to take advantage of the dependent exemption, which allows individuals one tax exemption for each person the individual claims as a dependent; and tax credits, such as the child care credit and earned income credit. A "dependent" is defined as a qualifying child or a qualifying relative, both of which include children in foster care.

NOTE:

This section is **NOT** intended as a substitution for legal or tax advice. Resource caregivers should contact the Internal Revenue Service, State of Hawai'i Department of Taxation, or a tax accountant for more information and assistance regarding such tax matters.

Complaints Against Resource Caregivers

Occasionally, DHS receives complaints regarding a resource caregiver. The licensing social worker will discuss the complaint with the resource caregiver to clarify the issue(s).

If a complaint is made regarding neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a child, DHS is required by law (HRS 350) to report it immediately to Child Welfare Services. A complaint of this nature will be followed up by the investigative social worker and, in some cases, the police. The child in foster care may be immediately removed pending the completion of the investigation. Your licensing social worker will discuss with you the outcome of the investigation and the next steps.

Complaints By Resource Caregivers

When differences between you and the social worker cannot be resolved, you may utilize the following procedure:

1. Contact the social worker's supervisor.
2. If you are unable to reach resolution at that level, contact the Section Administrator.
3. You may also contact the DHS Complaint Liaison.
4. If still unresolved, contact the Branch Administrator.

If you still feel that your concerns are not being addressed, other options include a conference with the Branch Administrator and the Director of Human Services. You may also wish to consult with other community resources.

Emergencies

Resource caregivers should take common sense steps to deal with emergencies. Here are some general guidelines.

1. Situations occurring **during work hours** and **requiring immediate notification** must be reported to the child's social worker as soon as possible. If the child's social worker is not available, ask to speak to the supervisor.
2. Situations occurring **after hours that do not require immediate notification** should be reported to the child's social worker the next working day.
3. For problems occurring **after hours that require immediate notification**, call the *Child Abuse & Neglect (CAN) 24-Hour Reporting Line* (832-5300 or 1-800-494-3991 toll free)



The following are guidelines to help you determine what to do in various emergencies.

If a child has run away or is missing:

1. First, give the child reasonable leeway in coming home based on your rules.
2. Call friends, parents or relatives who may know the whereabouts of the child.
3. If the child is not home within 2 hours of the agreed upon time, call the police and report the child as a runaway.
4. Call the *CAN 24-Hour Reporting Line* (832-5300 or 1-800-494-3991 toll free) to report the incident.

5. Inform the child's social worker or supervisor as soon as possible.

****Include helpful hint re: carrying child's information folder with you.**

If a child has a sudden serious illness, accident or dental problem:

1. Seek medical treatment immediately.
2. Be sure to take along the Medicaid/MedQuest card(s).
3. If parental approval is needed, contact the child's social worker, the social worker's supervisor or if after hours, call the *CAN 24-Hour Reporting Line* (832-5300 or 1-800-494-3991 toll free).

If anyone, including the child's own relatives, tries to take him or her from your home without the child's social worker's permission:

1. **DO NOT** let the child go.
2. If the person does not accept your refusal and threatens or causes a disturbance, call the police.
3. Report the incident to the child's social worker as soon as possible.

If a child is not returned within two hours of a scheduled visit with his or her family and you cannot contact them:

1. Call the child's social worker immediately.
2. After hours, call the *CAN 24-Hour Reporting Line* (832-5300 or 1-800-494-3991 toll free)

If a member of the child's family becomes unruly or abusive during a visit in your home:

1. Ask him or her to leave.
2. If the person refuses, call the police.
3. Report the incident to the child's social worker as soon as possible.

If you or your family has a personal crisis or emergency and need help to care for a child:

1. Call a relative or babysitter and inform the child's social worker the same day or the next working day if the crisis occurs after hours.
2. If child care cannot be arranged, call the child's social worker.

If a child should die while in your care:

1. Call the police immediately.
2. Inform the child's social worker or the supervisor immediately.

If a child becomes unruly or abusive:

1. Attempt to work with the child to calm him or her down.
2. If needed, get assistance from the child's social worker or the police.
3. Inform the child's social worker and the child's therapist of the behavior.

If a child causes personal or property damage to persons and property other than the resource home:

1. Notify the child's social worker and your licensing social worker.
2. Notify your own comprehensive home owner's insurance agent.

When a Foster Placement Ends

As a resource family, you are opening your hearts and home to a child in need. Strong attachments often develop as daily life is shared. Though the child's time with you may be limited, the bond you create is real. When the time comes for a child to leave your home, you may experience many different emotions such as anger, sadness, denial, or joy, all of which are normal reactions to separation.

There are many reasons why your foster child may no longer be in your home such as:

- You may have an emergency that will not allow you to care for her;
- Your foster child may be reunified with her birth family or placed in another permanent living situation;
- Upon turning 18, she is deemed an adult and no longer falls under the care of CWS;
- She runs away from your home and is placed in an alternative setting.

In some situations, you and your foster child can plan for his/her departure while others will leave little or no time to say good-bye. In either case, this transition may be difficult for your child in foster care, you and your family.

When you are told that your child will be leaving

If DHS determines that your child will be leaving your home, your child's social worker will develop a plan with you to enable a smooth transition. Whenever possible, you will be given a two-week notice. As the time nears for the child to leave your home it helps to prepare everyone for the transition: the child in foster care, your own children, and yourself. There are things that can be done to help soften the transition. For example, openly talk about the upcoming change to provide an opportunity for others to process and express their feelings and discuss with the child's social worker the possibility of keeping in touch with the child after he/she leaves. Expressing appreciation and sharing positive memories can boost the self-esteem of a child in foster care at a time when he or she may be feeling lost and insecure. Checking in with your own children and spouse/partner and acknowledging the joys and heartaches of becoming attached can help everyone cope with the up-coming separation.

When you can no longer care for a child

If at all possible, it is best to avoid multiple placements for youth in foster care as it can be detrimental to their overall well-being. There may be times though when you feel you can no longer care for the foster child in your home. Support and resources may be available that can help you work through those challenging times. However, if you're unable to continue caring for your child, let your child's social worker know immediately. Whenever possible, allow a two-week notice and permit your child to remain until a new home is found. Preparing your child in foster care for the move and helping him or her understand why it's necessary will help make the transition smoother. Involving your child's social worker, therapist, birth family, and other team members will give you and your child much needed support.

Unexpected changes in placement

There may be situations when there is not enough time to prepare for your foster child's departure, such as, in the case of an emergency or he/she runs away and is placed in another setting. Many times, this type of separation is even more difficult to deal with since you may not have the opportunity for closure with the child. Take the time to address any feelings that you and your family may be experiencing.

What the child should take upon leaving your home

In all circumstances, when a placement ends, items that came with the child or gifts given specifically to the child should go with the child. In addition, any items that were purchased through DHS vouchers/purchase orders and/or reimbursed by DHS for the child while in your care should go with the child. This would include clothes, toys, gifts, etc.

Other items that should go with the child include medical/dental cards and reports, child information folder, awards/trophies, report cards, lifebook, pictures, etc.

In Closing

We hope you find this Handbook useful as you embark on your exciting journey as a resource caregiver. Always remember that the Department of Human Services and many community organizations can provide you with support and resources and that you are not alone in this endeavor. Once again, mahalo for opening your heart and helping Hawai'i's keiki and families.

APPENDIX

National Foster Parents Association

Code of Ethics

Each foster parent has an obligation to maintain and improve the practice of fostering; constantly to examine, use and increase the knowledge upon which fostering is based; and to perform the service of fostering with integrity and competence.

Principles:

1. I regard as my primary obligation the welfare of the child served.
2. I shall work objectively with the agency in effecting the plan for the child in my care.
3. I hold myself responsible for the quality and extent of the services I perform.
4. I accept the reluctance of the child to discuss his or her past.
5. I shall keep confidential from the community, information pertaining to any child placed in my home.
6. I treat with respect the findings, views and actions of fellow foster parents, and use appropriate channels, such as a foster parent organization, to express my opinions.
7. I shall take advantage of available opportunities for education and training designed to upgrade my performance as a foster parent
8. I respect the worth of all individuals regardless of race, religion, sex or national ancestry in my capacity as a foster parent.
9. I accept the responsibility to work toward assuring that ethical standards are adhered to by any individual or organization providing foster care services.
10. I shall distinguish clearly in public between my statements and actions as an individual and as a representative of a foster parent organization.
11. I accept responsibility for working toward the creation and maintenance of conditions within the field of foster family care that enable foster parents to uphold the principles of this code.

The National Foster Parents Association (NFPA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization established in 1972. It is a national organization which, "strives to support foster parents and remains a consistently strong voice on behalf of all children."

The purpose of the NFPA is:

- To bring together foster parents, agency representatives and community people who wish to work together to improve the foster care system and enhance the lives of all children and families.
- To promote mutual coordination, cooperation and communication among foster parents, foster parent associations, child care agencies and other child advocates.
- To encourage the recruitment and retention of foster parents.
- To inform the membership and the general public of current information pertaining to the well-being of all children and in particular children needing foster care placement.

Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Birth Parent: The biological mother or father of the child

Child Abuse & Neglect Background Clearance (CAN): A Child Protective Services System Central Registry background check evaluating any history of abuse or neglect in which the person was identified as a perpetrator

Child Specific Resource Home: A resource home licensed for a specific child in foster care

Concurrent Planning: A type of permanency case planning in which reunification services are provided to the family of a child in out-of-home care at the same time that an alternative permanency plan is made for the child, in case reunification efforts fail

Criminal History Background Clearance: An examination of an individual's criminal history record through fingerprint analysis and name inquiry into state and national criminal history record files, including, but not limited to, the files of the Hawai'i criminal justice data center

CWS or Child Welfare Services: A branch within DHS, which oversees family strengthening and support, child protection, foster care, adoption, independent living and licensing of resource homes, group homes and child-placing organizations

DHS or the Department: State of Hawai'i's Department of Human Services, the department in which Child Welfare Services falls under

Difficulty of Care Payment (DOC): An additional payment, above the basic room and board payments, for special services provided by a licensed resource home for a foster child with physical, psychological, or emotional challenges

Educational Surrogate Parent: An individual who acts in place of the legal parent to make decisions about the student's education when no parent can be located or identified; and makes decisions in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation and educational placement of the student and the provision of a free appropriate public education

Foster Board Payment or Room and Board Rate: A set amount that resource caregivers are reimbursed each month for the care and maintenance of children placed by DHS in their homes

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem (VGAL): A person appointed by the court whose role is to protect and promote the needs and interests of the child(ren) in foster care

Household Member: Any individual residing in the home, including but not limited to renters and boarders

IEP: An abbreviation for Individualized Education Program, which is a written summary about the educational plan for a child with special needs

Independent Living Program: A program which teaches independent living and self-sufficiency skills to teens in foster care

Involuntary Placement: An out-of-home placement of a child by or with the participation of DHS, due to risk or occurrence of abuse or neglect.

Kinship Care: The full-time care of a child by someone related to the child by family ties or by prior relationship connection

'Ohana Conference: A meeting that gathers the extended family of children involved in the Child Welfare Services system to thoughtfully and carefully plan for the protection and safety of the children. It is family-centered, strengths based, community based, and culturally relevant.

On-call Resource Home (formerly Emergency Shelter): A licensed family home or group home where temporary care apart from parents or caretakers is provided to abused, neglected, or other children on a 24-hour emergency basis until more suitable plans are made for the children

Permanent Plan: A written plan, prepared by an appropriate authorized agency, which sets forth a position as to whether the court should order an adoption, guardianship, or permanent custody of the child

Provisional License or Provisional Certificate of Approval: A temporary certificate issued at the discretion of the agency for a period, usually not exceeding sixty days, to any resource caregiver home which has met the essential safety requirements but which has not fully met all licensing requirements at the time the certificate is issued

Resource Family (formerly foster family): A family who serves as a resource to children by providing foster care

Resource Home (Formerly General Licensed Foster Home): A home licensed for the general population of children in need of foster placement, not for a specific child

Respite Care: Short-term care of a child in foster care provided by adults other than the resource caregivers

Reunification: The returning of children in foster care to the custody of their birth parent(s) or family of origin

Termination of Parental Rights: The legal process that involuntarily removes parental rights that a parent has over their child

Unconditional License or Certificate of Approval: A certificate or license issued to resource caregivers by the department or a licensed child-placing organization to operate a resource home once all licensing requirements have been met

Voluntary Placement: An out-of-home placement of a child by or with the participation of DHS, after the parents or guardians of the child have requested assistance of DHS and have signed a voluntary placement agreement

Youth Circle: A youth-driven, strength-based, and solution-focused process that draws on a youth's support system to generate options and resources to support the youth's goals and informed decision-making with a purpose to celebrate and plan the youth's emancipation from foster care

(INSERT “OUR TEAM” CHART HERE)

Resource Caregiver: _____

Month/Year: _____

TOTAL MILES Traveled:			
Total miles X Rate:	<u>.50*</u>	=	\$ <u> </u>
Parking Fees:			\$ <u> </u>
(Attach parking receipt)			
TOTAL CLAIM for reimbursement:			\$ <u> </u>
(Add total mileages claim and parking fees)			

DRAFT 8/10/10

Resource Manuel can be downloaded at www.familyprogramshi.org. If you do not have access to the computer, contact the Warm Line at NUMBERS for a copy.