



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

George H. Sheldon
Secretary

DATE: October 29, 2010 *See Also: http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/kb/DCF_Pol/CFOP170-11_LicensingPlacement.pdf*

TO: Regional Directors

THROUGH: Pete Digre, Assistant Secretary for Operations *Handwritten initials*
David L. Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs *Handwritten initials*

FROM: Alan Abramowitz, State Director, Office of Family Safety *Handwritten initials*

SUBJECT: Sharing Case Records/Information with Foster Parents
ACTION REQUESTED: Share with staff who support children in foster family settings and with foster parents
DUE DATE: None

PURPOSE: Both staff and foster families participating in the Quality Parenting Initiative with Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation have expressed concerns about the lack of or inconsistent practice of information sharing. Children are the primary beneficiaries when their caregivers are fully informed. With that in mind, the one page attachment is intended to provide a quick summary of the legal requirements and also includes examples of the benefits of sharing records.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please share this attachment with all staff who make and support children in foster family settings including child protective investigators, licensing specialists, placement specialists, case managers and staff who provide support to foster parents. Also please share the attachment with foster parents.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For additional information, please contact Gay Frizzell at Gay_Frizzell@dcf.state.fl.us or at (850) 921-3005.

Thank you.

Attachment

cc: Carole Shauffer, Youth Law Center
Jane Soltis, Eckerd Family Foundation
Mary Cagle, Children's Legal Services
Peggy Sanford, Office of the General Counsel

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

Sharing Case Records/Information With Foster Parents

Partnership for Children in Out-of-Home Care: All of us responsible for the well-being of children in the custody of the Department undertake this responsibility in partnership, aware that none of us can succeed by ourselves. Children need normal childhoods as well as loving and skillful parenting which honors their loyalty to their biological family. In order to achieve these goals, partners must share information.

The purpose of this document is to provide simple and concise guidance consistent with Florida law and administrative code.

Legal and Policy Requirements

- The general rule is that foster parents must receive records and information, that relate to or assist in appropriately parenting their foster child except when expressly prohibited by law
- Full disclosure or comprehensive sharing of information with the foster parent is required by Florida Law and Florida Administrative Code

Benefits of Sharing Records With Foster Parents

- Being fully informed helps foster families provide high quality care for children
- Sharing of information helps to build/sustain meaningful partnerships between caseworkers and foster families
- Provides the foundation for supporting healthy relationships between foster families and biological families
- Helps to counter misconceptions and set realistic expectations about children and their biological families
- Provides the content for the child's lifebook

Records/Information That CANNOT Be Shared With Foster Families

- Reporter information to the Florida Abuse Hotline
- Financial records of the biological parents or any other party or participant
- HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) protected documents of the biological parents (medical reports, psychological or psychiatric reports) unless the foster parent is part of the treatment team working to achieve the goal(s) of the case plan
- Records of domestic violence centers

Examples of Records/Information That MUST BE Shared With Foster Families (this is not an all inclusive list)

- Medical, dental, psychological, psychiatric and behavioral history and on-going treatment and/or evaluation
- All court orders (shelter, adjudicatory, disposition, etc)
- Visitation and case plans
- Judicial or citizen review reports and attachments filed with the court
- Guardian ad litem reports
- Comprehensive behavioral assessments and other social assessments (may require redacting of biological parents information)
- All school records
- Copies of birth certificate and immigrant status documents
- Consents signed by the parents
- Staffing forms

If you and your supervisor/manager(s) are not sure about a particular document, ask DCF Children's Legal Services in your circuit for assistance. Please note that there may be redactions to the documents if they contain information that cannot be shared as described above.