

RESOURCE FAMILY PROGRAM

A program of JFS of Greater Harrisburg, Inc.

RESOURCE PARENT HANDBOOK

JFS of Greater Harrisburg
3333 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110

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JFS of Greater Harrisburg Resource Family Program

Who we are and what we do

Mission: JFS helps individuals and families meet life's challenges; we are a forward-thinking mental health and social service agency dedicated to helping people achieve their full potential while honoring choice, diversity, and both Jewish and Social Work values through every stage of life.

Our Key Beliefs relate to:

- Making a difference in people's lives through service, for Jews and non-Jews alike
- The physical, spiritual, and psychological well-being of our entire community
- Helping families, in whatever form, through periods of challenge and difficulty
- Bringing parents and children of all ages together
- Supporting people with special physical, emotional or psychological needs to cope effectively
- Respecting the dignity and value of all our clients, staff and volunteers

The Resource Family Program

The Resource Family program at JFS strives to develop families who are interested in being resources for children in foster care, by fostering a child until they reunify with a family member or adopting a child in the foster care system in need of permanency. The program seeks to achieve permanent homes for children who are placed in foster care by the county under concurrent planning –i.e., dual placement goals of reunification with birth family and permanency through termination of parental rights and adoption, if reunification is not possible. Each Resource Family at JFS should be committed to creating permanency for the child in their home through adoption or custodianship should the child be unable to reunify with their birth parent or relative. While the county agency determines what is best for each child, the Resource Family Program provides an approved and certified foster care resource to meet the child's needs, identify issues that need special attention, and provide the child with a safe, stable, and emotionally available parent each day.

JFS carefully recruits and trains Resource Families and considers them to be an integral part of the child's service team. Jewish Family Service promotes a child's growth and development by providing the physical care and nurturing each child needs, along with opportunities for individual, social, emotional, and intellectual development that enhances the child's potential in these areas. Resource Families are expected to provide a safe home and living/sleeping environment, day to day physical care, routine and specialized health care management, supervision according to their developmental age, and monitoring to assure normal developmental needs and educational progress is made. We also expect Resource Families to provide supportive services such as assisting with visitation and communication with the birth

family as set up by the county agency. We believe this care should be provided in an environment that recognizes and values the child's own immediate and extended birth family as well as their ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious heritage.

JFS Resource Families participate in the development of the Individual Foster Care Service Plan (IFCSP) in the first month of a child's placement, and they cooperate with enacting the plan that is finalized. IFCSPs are monitored at monthly home visits to ensure that every child placed into foster care is receiving the best possible service. The care and planning for foster children may require collaboration with agency staff around mental health and educational services, monitoring the child's behavior and communicating observations to agency, providing client specific advocacy, and having routine contact and informal interaction with the birth family, as well as providing role modeling for the child and the birth parents.

The foster child and family will be assigned a Jewish Family Service caseworker who may visit the foster home biweekly, or monthly, depending on the needs of the foster child and family. Children requiring intensive services are monitored with a minimum of weekly contact and in-person contact on a least a bi-weekly basis.

This Resource Family Handbook details the JFS Resource Family program practices, agency staff and Resource Parent responsibilities, and current foster care regulations. Each of the following pages describe our policy regarding the care of the foster children in your home. Please refer to this handbook as your guide on how to handle many situations in your home. As the world changes, as regulations change, and as we gain understanding of the issues, this handbook may also change, so watch for updated policies. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the program director.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Certification/Evaluation of Resource Family Home

Initial Certification

The Resource Family Program of JFS is required to inspect and evaluate resource homes to ensure compliance with The Department of Human Service regulations. As part of the evaluation process these topics, but not limited to these topics, will be addressed: The emotional stability of the resource parents, existing family relationships, supportive community ties, attitudes and expectations towards current children, parent/child relationship as they affect the dependent children placed in the home, ability to interact with birth parents, ability to parent a special needs child, type of child best suited for the resource family, and ability of applicant to work with the JFS Resource Family Program.

All Resource Parents will receive a minimum of 30 hours of training before being certified as resource parents. Each resource family will also receive an orientation to the program and agency that will include: *JFS Resource Family Program* philosophy; practices; the role of the resource parent; discipline policy; the role of *JFS* is supervising placements; procedures; regulations, and statutes; on-going training requirements, and requirements regarding First Aid/CPR. The family will also be provided with the program Grievance Policy at the time they initiate the assessment process.

The results of the Resource Family's evaluation shall be sent to the resource parents, along with a letter of approval at that time and their Foster Care Certification, for display in the home. A Resource Family may not be approved if the supporting documents required by state regulations are not provided in a timely fashion or if the documents show that a family member fails to meet the standards of state regulations. Failure to meet state regulations as a reason for disapproval of a resource family may not be grieved. However, it is the program policy to outline the reason for disapproval and corrective action required to be reconsidered.

A home may be temporarily approved for a kinship placement in the event of an emergency. Temporary approval is allowed for a maximum of 60 days from the date of placement of the child into the home. If the home is **not** fully approved within the 60 days, the child **must** be removed from the home.

Annual Re-evaluation

The Resource Family Program is required to inspect and evaluate resource homes to ensure continued compliance with The Department of Human Services regulations on an annual basis. The written evaluation and family profile update is viewed as a tool that addresses key areas including safety requirements, resource parents' cooperation with a child's individual service plan, etc. The resource family may be required to update supporting documents also at this time per state regulations.

A Resource Family found to not be in compliance with state regulation is placed on "provisional approval" status. The Resource Family is given up to two months (60 days) to make necessary corrections. "Full approval" status is reinstated when compliance issues are reconciled at any time during that time frame.

If a Resource Family receives "provisional approval" and a dependent child is currently placed in the resource family home, the dependant child may remain in the home provided that the reasons for noncompliance pose no health and safety hazard to the child. No additional placements will occur in a home that is provisionally approved.

If at the end of the provisional period, the Resource Family has not completed the necessary steps to achieve full approval, this agency must terminate approval of the resource home and remove all dependent children placed in that home.

When a Resource Family is terminated by the agency, the JFS Resource Family Coordinator will schedule a conference with the Resource Parents to review the situation. Strengths as well as weaknesses will be discussed. A current evaluation will be written, listing the reasons for termination. A letter is sent to the Resource Family informing them of the official termination and any plan available for reconsideration. If termination occurs due to failure to provide a safe home for any child placed in the home, either through unsafe home conditions or unsafe parenting practices, the family will not be permitted to be reconsidered.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Training Requirements

Resource parents are required by program policy and state regulations to participate in training prior to approval, and on an annual basis for renewal of their license.

Prior to approval, each Resource Parent must complete thirty (30) hours of pre-service training, as well as Mandated Reporter training and Reasonable and Prudent Parenting training. They must also participate in an "Orientation to Resource Parenting" training with the Resource Family Coordinator.

Per Pennsylvania Foster Care regulations, Resource Families are required to complete a course in Infant and Child First Aid/CPR. In most situations, completion of a minimum one-hour on-line course meets the requirement. If either Resource Parent is required to complete full Certification in First Aid/CPR for employment, then proof of completion of this course also meets the requirement. If a family is willing or does accept placement of a child with special medical needs, **at least one (1) parent** will be required to complete Certification through the American Red Cross within thirty (30) days of placement of that child into their home.

Following the completion of the initial 30-hours of required training to be approved as a Resource Family, each resource parent must successfully complete a minimum of twelve (12) hours of approved training annually prior to reassessment.

Following participation in the initial training, a training plan will be developed for each resource family. For families new to the foster care and adoption from foster care, completion of the initial thirty (30) hours of training will be required in the group and on-line setting. If a family is transferring from another agency or has prior experience in this field (CASA volunteer, work at a CYS agency, prior approval by another foster care program), a training plan will be created based on their prior experience, professional training they may have received, and the identified needs of children and youth they are willing to parent. It is required that each adult complete training in each of the topic areas determined essential for successful resource family parenting.

For reassessment, Resource parents are encouraged to take advantage of appropriate, relevant training in their own communities when available. A family's training plan may include reading, on-line or in person training, viewing of DVDs, relevant movies, and individual discussion on training topics. The program also has a library of books, tapes, CD's of information pertaining to the special needs of children that you may access and read or view for credit towards your required training hours.

It is the resource parent's responsibility to forward necessary documentation of attended training from outside sources to their Resource Family Coordinator for inclusion in their file. Credit will not be given for outside training without written confirmation of attendance or Transfer of Learning form.

Failure to meet the minimum state training requirements will necessitate the resource family home being placed on provisional approval. JFs of Harrisburg will be unable to place additional children in the resource family home until full compliance with training requirements is achieved.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Safety Requirements

State regulations require that resource parents adhere to the following safety requirements:

1. Containers of poisonous, caustic, toxic, flammable or other dangerous material kept in the home must be distinctly marked or labeled as hazardous and stored in areas inaccessible to children.
2. All prescription and pain relief medications are to be secured in a locked setting that is inaccessible to children. This includes both over the counter medication such as Aspirin, Tylenol, Excedrin, etc., as well as medications that a physician prescribes.
3. Emergency telephone numbers, including those for fire, police, poison control, and ambulance must be conspicuously posted adjacent to all land-line telephones.
4. Fireplaces, fireplace inserts, and wood and coal burning stoves, if allowed by local ordinances, should be securely screened or equipped with protective guards, if possible. Any freestanding heaters must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications for operation.
5. An operable smoke detector must be placed on each level of the residence. The smoke detector must be maintained in operable condition at all times. It is recommended that at least one CO2 detector be present in the home.
6. A portable fire extinguisher, suitable for Class B fires, must be available in the kitchen and other cooking areas. The fire extinguisher must be tested yearly, or have a gauge to ensure adequate pressure.
7. Protective safety caps must be placed in all electrical outlets accessible to children younger than five years of age.
8. Exposed electrical wires are prohibited.
9. Drinking water from a non-community water source must be potable as determined by an annual inspection.
10. When transporting children who are younger than eight (8) years old or who weigh less than 80 pounds in a motor vehicle, resource parents shall ensure that the children are restrained in car seats that meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Firearms in Resource Family Home policy

Resource parents, as all US Citizens, are permitted to maintain firearms in their home and to apply for and obtain a legal permit to carry a concealed weapon. In order to ensure the safety of the children placed in our Resource homes, JFS requires that Resource Parents abide by the following safety protocol.

1. Foster parents must notify the JFS staff completing the home study of any weapons/firearms in the home at the time of the initial home safety assessment. If a Resource Parent possesses a permit for concealed carry, a copy is to be provided to the Resource Family Coordinator.
2. Firearms are to be secured unloaded in the home at all times, with firearms locked and secured in a locked gun safe or unloaded with a cable or trigger lock, no ammunition in the chamber, and ammunition/magazine secured separate from the firearms. Non-functional firearms are excluded from this policy. Foster parents are required to keep a written inventory of all firearms in the home, including model and serial number.
3. If the Resource Parent possesses a permit to carry issued by a Pennsylvania county Sheriff, they must handle the firearm in accordance with all Commonwealth statutes and regulations concerning concealed carry. When it is not physically present on the Resource Parent's person, it must be secured as listed in #2, including when traveling in a vehicle.
4. If a Resource Parent wishes to introduce a youth placed into their home to hunting or target shooting, they must notify and receive permission from the county caseworker, and then notify the JFS Resource Family Coordinator. They must also arrange for the youth to participate in a Pennsylvania Game Commission certified hunter safety course with proof of completion provided to the Resource Family Coordinator or under adult supervision at a private shooting range. The youth may not keep the firearm on their person or in their bedroom at any time and may only use under supervision of the Resource Parent or a certified instructor.
5. If a Resource Parent is a professional peace officer and required to keep a loaded weapon in their home when off-duty, they must identify a place out of reach of the child where the weapon is stored and ensure that the child does not have access to the weapon without supervision. It is highly recommended that the firearm be equipped with a trigger lock to avoid accidental discharge.
6. If a firearm is missing or stolen from the home, a police report shall be immediately filed and immediately thereafter the agency shall be notified of the loss.
7. Failure to abide by this policy will result in review of a Resource Family's foster care license and safety plan and may lead to closure of the home and removal of any foster child.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Motor Vehicle Practices/Transportation Responsibility

Resource parents who transport children by car are required to have valid driver's licenses, valid vehicle registration, current inspection of the vehicle, and current automobile insurance. A copy of these documents must be in the resource family case file. It is recommended that the limits of liability be a minimum of \$100,000/\$300,000.

All children must wear seat belts at all times or be securely restrained in an appropriate car seat/booster that meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards while riding in a motor vehicle. A foster child under the age of 12 may not be a passenger in the front seat of a vehicle.

At times, adults other than resource parents may transport a child to activities. The expectation is that the Resource Parent knows the driver and is able to validate that the driver has a current motor vehicle driver's license, car registration and inspection, and adequate insurance coverage. IF they are a regular source of transportation, like an extended family member, the Resource Coordinator may ask for all documents indicated in the first paragraph of this policy.

A dependent child may not be a passenger in a vehicle **driven by an individual under the age of 18** without prior consent of the resource parents. Resource parents are to consider the training they received as part of Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards when determining if a youth driver is appropriate for the child in their care. Dependent children may operate or be a passenger on motorcycles, mini-bikes, ATV's, riding lawn mowers, or other motorized vehicles **only if** the Resource Parents feel that it is safe and appropriate. Helmets are to be worn at all times.

Transportation Responsibility

Resource parents are responsible for transporting children to the following:

1. Medical and dental appointments
2. Appointments in accordance with goals and objectives outlined in the child's service plan, such as therapy or specialized medical treatment.
3. Respite care visits that take place at the request of the resource family.
4. Visits with the birth family.
5. Court Reviews
6. School-related functions, sports, or other recreational activities.

The resource family will be reimbursed at the agency mileage rate for those appointments that are mandated by the child's Service Plan. This encompasses all the above listed activities except #6.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Medical and Dental Requirements

1. A dependent child placed into out of home care must receive a medical evaluation by a licensed physician within **60 days of the child's placement** in the Resource Family home, unless the child has had an evaluation **within the last 90 days** and the results of the evaluation are available. The evaluation shall include:
 - A review of the child's health history.
 - Physical examination of the child.
 - Laboratory or diagnostic tests as indicated by the examining physician, including those required to detect communicable disease.
2. The schedule of medical appointments is determined by the child's age and occurs as follows:

Birth – 6 months: every 6 weeks
7 months – 23 months: every 3 months
23 months and older: annually
3. A licensed dentist must complete dental examinations **within sixty (60) days** of placement if the child is 3 years old or older, unless the child has had an appraisal within the previous 6 months and the results of the appraisal are available. The appraisal shall include:
 - Taking or reviewing the child's dental history.
 - Examination of the hard and soft tissue of the oral cavity.
 - X-rays for diagnostic purposes, if deemed necessary by the dentist.
4. Dental examinations must occur every six (6) months.
5. The resource parent is responsible to take the appropriate form to each medical or dental appointment and have the examiner complete the form. The designated form **must** be returned to the Resource Family Coordinator.
6. The child's physician must accept Medical Assistance unless other arrangements for payment are made prior to filling the examination.
7. All medications must be paid in full by Medical Assistance unless other arrangements for payment are made prior to filling the prescription.

8. You are **required** to keep a medication log for all medications given to the foster child, including over the counter (OTC) medications, like vitamins. This is to be given to the Resource Family Coordinator at the monthly visit.
9. All medical issues (appointments, medication administration and changes, symptoms, first aid procedures, phone contacts, etc.) should be reported to the Resource Family Coordinator immediately or during scheduled monthly home visits.
9. If in doubt about any medical situation, consult with the Resource Family Coordinator or a physician. Resource Family Coordinators should always be made aware of conditions that warrant medical attention.

Children's Immunization Record

Each time a child receives an immunization, the designated form must be completed for inclusion in the child's record. Please report the immunization activity to the Resource Family Coordinator and keep the form in the child's record until the child is discharged from your home. The updated record must be sent to the county caseworker to ensure accuracy of the child's record.

Psychotropic Medications

A dependent child's county caseworker must obtain authorization for all use of psychotropic medication. No psychotropic medication may be administered without the consent of the county caseworker or the court of dependency. This applies to the initial prescription of medication. Any dosage changes to a currently authorized medication must be reported but additional consent is not required. If the psychotropic medication is being given in an emergency situation, the county is to be notified through their emergency contact.

Unusual Incident Report

1. The Resource Parent must complete an unusual incident report each time a child receives a noticeable injury that requires medical attention beyond routine in-home first aid. The report should then be given to the Resource Family Coordinator.
2. An unusual incident report must be completed if a child goes to the hospital emergency room for any reason. If this occurs, the Resource Family Coordinator is to be notified immediately. For example, if the child goes to the hospital emergency room after-hours for a high fever, you should call the Resource Family Coordinator on-call immediately who will, in turn, notify the placing county's 24-hour emergency service. The Resource Family Coordinator will complete the unusual incident report with information you provide regarding the incident.



Resource Family Program

Medical and Dental Treatment Protocols

Consent to treatment

Before Resource Parents take a child for medical and/or dental treatment or examination, they are to be provided with written consent for medical treatment signed by the birth parents or an authorized agent of the county Children and Youth agency, as required by state regulation.

The county agency is able to provide consent for emergency medical care if a parent is not available or refuses to sign, until a court orders the consent. If the child requires emergency treatment, immediately take the child to a physician or to a hospital emergency room. In these instances, it is not necessary to obtain or provide consent when, in the physician's judgment, an attempt to secure consent would result in delay of treatment that would increase risk to the child's life or health. If emergency treatment is required, please contact the Resource Family Coordinator as soon as possible.

Consent for adolescents:

A minor age fourteen (14) and older may consent to medical treatment for conditions related to drug and alcohol use, pregnancy, or venereal disease. This includes the use of psychotropic medication. In these instances, it is not necessary to obtain the consent of another person or the court. If a child refuses to give consent, the parent or guardian may provide consent for substance abuse or psychiatric hospitalization only.

Medication Monitoring

Resource Parents are required to document all administration of medications to the children placed in their care. (please see "medical log")

All prescription medications administration is to be documented on the med log form that was provided to you. Please list the dosage and times the child is to receive the medication and then have the adult who oversees the administration initial the form after the medication is taken. All medication given to children is to be given to the child by an adult over 18 at the designated time, in the proper dosage, and the child is to be observed to ensure the medication is taken

All over-the-counter medications are to be logged by the Resource Parents, indicating the name and dates used and any adverse reaction the child has to the medication.

All prescription medication and over the counter medications should be kept away from young children and older children who may misuse them, and in the control of the Resource Parents at all times.

Jewish Family Service
Resource Family Program

MEDICAL DOCTOR VISIT

Name of Child:

Birthdate:

Date of Visit:

Reason for Visit:

Diagnosis:

Treatment Provided and/or medication prescribed:

Tests ordered or conducted:

Referrals made to:

Doctor's Signature _____

Date _____

Follow-up visit scheduled? _____ When? _____

Jewish Family Service
Resource Family Program

DENTAL VISIT

I verify that _____
(Name of Child)

was seen on _____ for a dental exam
(Date)

and cleaning at my office.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK DONE:

FOLLOW UP RECOMMENDATIONS:

Dentist's signature

Date

JFS Resource Family Program

Month/year:

Medication Log for:

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Medication: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dosage: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Time: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Time: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Time: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Please initial after dosage is administered and confirmed



JFS of Harrisburg
Resource Family Program

Per Diem Reimbursement

Resource parents are reimbursed for room, board, clothing, and incidentals at a daily rate according to the level of care as contracted by the county agency. The reimbursement is not considered as your income for tax purposes. It is intended to cover the costs of food, clothing, toiletries, routine transportation, day care (possibly), recreational costs, and other expensed incurred in the care of a child. The Per Diem is determined by the child's age and level of needs at the time of placement.

You will be reimbursed mileage for activities included in the Individual Foster Care Service Plan. These include making sure the child attends school daily, attendance at medical and dental appointments and therapy, participation in court ordered reunification and visitation services, and attendance at court hearing. It does not include transportation for social or sports activities. You will be asked to report mileage at the end of each month on your child's invoice for reimbursement.

If the dependent child in your care has a financial need that you feel unable to meet with the per diem, such as special expenses for participation in an activity, school related expenses, graduation fees, camp fees, etc., please notify your Resource Family Coordinator so that other financial options may be explored with you and within the agency.

Remember that foster children are considered low-income families of one (1) for purposes of applying for free school lunch and other low-income programs, such as Head Start and Camp Scholarships. The child in your home may be eligible for childcare funding. Your income does not need to be reported as the foster parent of this child.

Your Resource Family Coordinator will ask you to complete a clothing inventory within 48-hours of any placement and provide a copy to the caseworker. This alerts us to needs for that child, and ensures that if the child leaves your home, they have all their belongings. We suggest that you keep your copy and update as the child acquires new clothing. PLEASE REMEMBER, if the inventory is NOT completed, then we cannot request clothing allowance from the county of placement.

The Resource Family Program of JFS reserves the right to question the adequacy of meals, clothing, recreational opportunities, or other needs being provided by the resource family. If there are concerns, we may require the Resource Parents to save receipts.



DATE INVOICE SUBMITTED FOR:

month/year

Name of child:

Child's County of Dependency:

Name of family:

Home Address:

Telephone/Email address:

Child's level of care

Per diem rate X days of month child in home = \$0.00

TOTAL including Mileage: \$0.00

MILEAGE:

| DATE | DESTINATION | MILES | AMOUNT |
|--------------|-------------|-------|--------|
| | | | \$0.00 |
| | | | \$0.00 |
| | | | \$0.00 |
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| | | | \$0.00 |
| | | | \$0.00 |
| TOTAL | 45 | 0 | \$0.00 |



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Removal of a child from the designated Resource Family home

If the resource family believes that it is in the child's best interest to be removed from their family home, the family is to give the Resource Family Coordinator thirty (30) days' notice of the request for removal. This request must be done in writing for the notice time to begin.

The team should meet as soon as possible **after** this request is received to discuss the issue precipitating the request for removal. If there is an issue that can be resolved that would allow the placement to continue, a plan will be made and included in the child's Individual Foster Care Service plan.

All team members will agree to participate in the plan for at least fourteen days before determining if the problem is beginning to resolve and they are willing to continue. If the plan does not reduce the problem, the county caseworker will work with the Resource Family's coordinator to identify an alternative placement for the child and arrange for the move within the original thirty (30) day timeframe.

The circumstances of the removal of a child from the Resource Family's home should be discussed in person with the family within sixty (60) days to determine if the family needs to change the type of child they will accept or receive additional training and supports prior to accepting a new placement. If the family refuses to engage and participate in the plan, they will close as a Resource Family after removal of the child.

If the child's removal from the resource family home is initiated by the county caseworker, the family is to receive fourteen (14) day notice of the date of removal and the reason for removal, whenever possible. If the child has been in your care for over six (6) months and you do not agree with the removal of the child, you have the right to request standing in court so that your thoughts on the child's placement may be heard during dependency review hearings. In this situation, consult an attorney.

If removal is due to allegations of abuse or neglect by a member of the Resource Family, the child will be removed to a respite home immediately pending investigation of the allegation. If the allegation is unfounded, or if the offending party is removed from the resource home, the child may return to the home with approval of the family and county caseworker.

If a child runs from your home and does not return within a set number of days, is placed in a residential treatment facility by authorization, or is placed in a delinquency detention program, the placement is considered closed. The number of days that the child may be away for these reasons without closure of the placement is dependent on the county contract with AdoptionLinks. If you are willing to remain the resource family for that child, please inform your Resource Family Coordinator. The final decision regarding the placement of the child in these situations sits with the county of dependency.

6. Remember that JFS is here to support you. We can provide a safe haven for your family for a short or long time. If you must leave your home for any reason, contact us as soon as feasible to let us know where you are staying and how long you might be gone. If for some reason our agency is also closed, use the emergency contact number.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Runaway

Anytime a child placed into a Resource Family home has run away, the Resource Parents need to act to make sure the child is safe and is found. However, when a child is identified as a runaway will vary for many reasons. These will need to be taken into consideration before the Resource Parents know who to contact and how to proceed. Children may have valid reasons for leaving a family's home, despite rules that they should not leave without the Resource Parent's permission.

1. Children under the age of five (5) should be protected from leaving the home without an adult through environmental means, such as door latches above the child's height, baby gates, and high levels of supervision.
 - a. A child in this age group should not be without direct adult supervision at any time, whether inside or outside the home.
 - b. The Resource Parent should ensure that any temporary caregiver is old enough to appropriately supervise the young child and has a safe environment to do so.
 - c. If, despite precautions, a child wanders from the family home, the Police should be contacted immediately for assistance is searching for the child. Contact the Resource Family Coordinator immediately following contact with the police.
2. A young school aged child (6-12)
 - a. A child in this age group should always be close to an adult for supervision. They may not be left alone without an adult at any time.
 - b. If the child leaves the home without adult supervision due to emotional reasons (upset, angry, etc.) the child should be permitted to calm down and encouraged to return to the home within a reasonable amount of time. They should also be encouraged to stay close to the home.
 - c. The Resource Parent should not threaten or make false promises to get the child to return to the home but share concern and allow them physical distance to self-calm.
 - d. If the child leaves the home and the surrounding property and is not in sight of the Resource Parent, the police should be contacted to assist in the search. They should also be contacted if the child refuses to return to the home.
 - e. If a child in this age range does not come home at the assigned time, such as when they get off the school bus or from a neighbor's home at dinner time, all efforts should be made to assist that child to calmly return home. If they refuse or they cannot be found within fifteen (15) minutes, the police should be contacted for assistance.
 - f. Once the child is home safely and calm, a plan should be made with the child to avoid conflict over the need to self-calm outside the home, or

through activity, or to keep the child safe during unsupervised transition time.

- g. In all situations, the Resource Family Coordinator should be contacted and an incident report provided within 24-hours of the incident.

3. An adolescent (13-18)

- a. A youth in this age group is permitted to be unsupervised in the home for short periods of time (no more than two hours for the most mature child). A plan should be in place in this situation about who to call in case of emergency, or if the child makes plans to leave the home prior to the adult's return.
 - b. A youth who leaves the home during conflict or for emotional reasons should be permitted to self-calm according to prior agreement without repercussions so long as they follow their plan and stay within the boundaries established with the Resource Parent. For example, if the youth is permitted to walk to the corner basketball court to calm down, for up to fifteen minutes, doing so does NOT constitute a runaway incident.
 - c. A youth who has permission to be out of the home with friends or family, and who does not return in the required time period, should be given consequences commiserate with the lateness of their return.
 - d. If the youth is more than one (1) hour later than the agreed-upon time, they will be considered a runaway. Attempts to locate the youth by contacting associates should be attempted as soon as possible. A report should be made to the local police and the Resource Family Coordinator on call as soon as possible.
4. A child or youth of any age who leaves the home after making statements of a suicidal or homicidal nature and has means and/or ideation should be considered runaway immediately and the authorities contacted for the youth's protection.
5. For the purposes of reporting a child or youth as a runaway, the term "home" includes the Resource Family home, any respite homes, the school, any therapeutic providers, and any other supportive agencies involved with the child.
6. If a child is reported to anyone as a runaway according to this guidance, an Unusual Incident report is to be provided in writing within 24-hours to the Resource Family Coordinator.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Disaster Planning

Nobody can truly plan and prepare for natural or man-made disasters that may strike. Whether a hurricane, home fire, winter storm, extreme temperatures, or flooding of local streams and rivers, each person and family can only do their best to plan and then tap into available resources and services for assistance as needed.

We don't expect Resource Families to have a plan for all possible disasters. However, we can make some strong suggestions based on information available from national organizations that try to work with families in these situations. Here are some suggestions for preparing for natural, and unnatural disasters.

1. As part of the initial home assessment process, you are asked to create and post a home evacuation plan in your home in plain site to all household members. Make sure it is current and teach it to the children in your home, reviewing it whenever a new child is placed in your care. Practice leaving the home by more than one exit in case of fire.
2. Have a family evacuation plan that includes three meeting places in case of evacuation: One nearby where you will gather as a family, such as a neighbor's house that can be seen from your house; a second further away, 1- 2 miles, in case the neighborhood is evacuated or inaccessible; and a third place over ten miles away, in case of wider evacuation. Suggestions are a house of a known person or public building that would be open in case of emergency, such as a school or fire house. You will be required to provide this information to your Resource Family Coordinator on an annual basis, in case we need to find you after an evacuation or nature disaster.
3. Make a contact sheet of important phone numbers and evacuation sites with addresses and contact information and put this in each child's school or diaper bag. Give the information to older children to put in their wallets, purses, and cell phones.
4. In your plan you will be asked to include the name and phone number of someone known to the family who lives out of the area, like a relative in another state. During certain kinds of disasters local phone service may be unavailable but long-distance service will work.
5. Create an information file that is kept away from your home, like with a relative or at work. Place copies of court papers, medical cards, school papers, etc. in the file in case of emergency. Include a copy of your homeowner's insurance and deeds or automobile titles. A list of medications for each family member, prescribing doctor, and pharmacy may be helpful also, especially if you must stay out of your home or community for a number of days and don't have the needed medications. You can also take a photo for cloud storage of these documents. **DO NOT ASSUME** your phone will work for you to retrieve them.

Family name:
Home address:

Date of plan:

Home Phone

Cell Phone:

Household members name: Age If they will need assistance

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1 Place we will meet that is visible from our home but away from the home:
(describe)

2. Place we will meet that is about 1 mile from the home in case we can't get to
our home or down our street (describe):

3. Place we will meet that is at least 10 miles from our home in case of wide
evacuation (describe):

4. Person out of the area who will know where we are if we cannot be reached at
local numbers:

Name:

Relationship to family:

Phone:

Where they live:



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Allegations of Abuse and/or Neglect

Occasionally, the agency will receive an allegation of child abuse or neglect from the community, a resource parent regarding a birth parent, or from a child in placement. Agency personnel are mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to report suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. These allegations are addressed as follows:

1. When any Resource Parent learns of any alleged child abuse, the Resource Parent is required by law to report it to Child Abuse Hotline. This report may be done by telephone or on-line by logging into the Child Welfare Information System (<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>), the same that is used to obtain a ChildLine clearance. This is to occur within 24-hours of learning of the abuse.
2. The requirement to report includes recent acts of abuse or neglect as well as reports of prior abuse, such as when the child lives in the birth parents' home.
3. The alleged abuse is also to be reported to the Resource Family Coordinator as soon as possible after learning of the abuse. Please use the emergency contact number.
4. The county caseworkers of any dependent children in the home, including those for which there is no allegation of abuse or neglect, will be notified immediately of any allegations.
5. If the allegations of abuse and neglect are against the Resource Parents, all dependent children placed in the home will immediately be moved to a licensed respite home until the completion of the investigation.
6. If the allegation pertains to minor care issues or is of "poor practice" in nature (ex. swearing at a child or insufficient supervision), that does not meet the state standard for reportable child abuse or neglect, the Resource Family Coordinator will meet with the family to determine their validity. A plan of correction will be developed and implemented to avoid poor practice in the future.
7. Please also review the discipline policy of the program, to ensure that only appropriate means of discipline are utilized with foster children.

If it is necessary to suspend or revoke full approval the foster parents will be notified, in writing, with instructions outlining the procedure of appeal.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

On-Call Procedures for Non-Business Hours

1. Resource parents should contact the on-call Resource Family coordinator in case of an emergencies or unusual incidents during non-business hours (5:00 PM until 9:00 AM), weekends, and holidays. Please limit use of the on-call to emergencies or situations that demand immediate attention. Examples include: a child being taken to the emergency room or admitted to the hospital, a child in crisis, a runaway, a car accident with the child in the care, or resource parents having a need for additional support, etc.
2. The on-call Resource Family coordinator will assist you to manage whatever emergency you are involved in, or to notify the required agency personnel in the case of a medical or psychiatric emergency requiring hospitalization. Since our program's emphasis is on the safety of all children, we may direct you to contact the police or follow a specific plan of action to maintain safety.
3. The on-call phone number will be provided to you prior to visitation or placement of any dependent child into your home.
4. If the phone is not answered, please leave your name, message, and a phone number where you can be reached and we will get back to you quickly.
5. If there is any doubt about placing a call, always err on the side of caution, and call.
6. The Resource Parents are required to provide **a written critical incident report** for any crisis that involved police, emergency medical care or psychiatric assessment, runaway, or destruction of property.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Unusual Incidents

Resource Parents are responsible for reporting to the Resource Family Coordinator any unusual incident or occurrence of alleged child abuse involving a dependent child in their care. A report must be filed with the Resource Family Coordinator within 24 hours of occurrence. Several types of incidents require immediate notification of program on-call coordinator

- Emergency medical care of a child
- Admission of a child to the hospital
- Child has run away
- Physical control of the child becomes necessary due to severe “acting out”
- Child fails to return from a family visit
- Arrest of the child
- The child has been injured or has injured another person
- Anytime the child alleges abuse by either the resource parent or any other individual

All incidents that affect the safety and well being of a child are considered “unusual” and should be reported immediately. Reports are filed by calling the Resource Family Coordinator during regular business hours or referring to the on-call procedure during non-business hours, weekends, and holidays.

PLEASE REMEMBER that as a resource parent, you are also a **Mandated Reporter** of suspected child abuse. If the child in your home alleges prior to recent child abuse, you **MUST** report it to Childline, as well as to the Resource Family Coordinator. Even if you suspect that the child is telling you about abuse that has previously been reported to ChildLine and Children and Youth, you are required to report it unless you are able to immediately verify that it has already been reported. Remember that you are to report suspected abuse, and it is not your responsibility to determine if the abuse actually happened, or if it reaches the legal definition of abuse.

JFS of Harrisburg Resource Family Program

Resource family ____
Respite Provider ____

UNUSUAL INCIDENT REPORT

Child:

County of Dependency:

Resource Family or Respite Family:

Address where incident occurred:

Provider Telephone:

Time and date of incident:

Nature of unusual incident:

Safety Plan that results from incident:

Resource Family Coordinator Contacted? Yes ☐ No ☐ Date and time of contact:
County Caseworker Contacted? Yes ☐ No ☐ Date and time of contact
Was there Police involvement? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, attach copy of police report
Was medical attention required? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, attach copy of medical report.
Was the child removed to respite resource? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, Date of move:

Resource:

Address:

Phone:

Report made to HCSIS? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, date and time of report:

Signature of Resource Parent/Respite provider

Date

Program Director _____

Executive Director _____



JFS of Harrisburg Resource Family Program

Private (Confidential) information

As a foster or adoptive parent to a dependent child, you will receive information about that child, and their birth family, which is confidential in nature. This includes medical, mental health, behavioral, and educational information. It may also include identifying information about the birth family, such as their name and current situation. You will learn things from the child, and they will tell you stories about their life with the birth parents or in foster care, or things that they learn or are told during birth family visitation.

ALL of this information is considered confidential, and you are not the person with the right to release the information except in limited situations. These situations include:

1. Release to therapeutic, medical care, or educational providers, such as a doctor or psychologist completing an evaluation on the child;
2. When the information is necessary for proper service provision and the service is done with the consent of the court or birth parent; and
3. If a child tells you about current or past abuse.

If you take the child to the doctor or therapist, and neither the caseworker from Children and Youth nor a birth parent is present, you may share current and historical information about the child and the birth parent, if known, and if it relates to the treatment. For example, you might know that the birth father has a family history of diabetes, that three siblings have learning disabilities, or about exposure to alcohol prenatally.

If the child tells you about current or past child abuse, you are required to report it to ChildLine, and then to your Resource Family Coordinator. If you are unsure if this information is known to the county CYC caseworker, still report as required as a Mandated Reporter. Let the CYC caseworker evaluate the information against known history. Remember, you **must** break confidentiality to report suspected child abuse.

Information about foster or adoptive children is not to be shared with members of your extended family, the community, or to parents of friends of the child. It is appropriate to relate current behavioral information about the child, or medication information when the adult overseeing the child's care will have some responsibility for that. For example, you will need to inform the Cub Scout Den Mother about your use of "Time In" for misbehaviors, so that she can use this with your child during meetings, but she is not entitled to know that he has trouble because of abuse by his birth family. The parent of a child having a sleepover should know to give the child her medication in the morning, but not the child's current diagnosis and treatment.

You **may not** sign a Release of Information to give permission for information to be shared between different service providers. A Release of Information may only be signed by the county caseworker, or the birth parent, if parental rights have not been terminated.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Discipline Practices

Resource parents are expected to provide a healthy and structured environment that includes a form of discipline agreed upon with the AdoptionLinks/ JFS coordinator.

- Resource parents shall be provided with training regarding discipline techniques that stress praise and encouragement rather than retribution and retaliation.
- Children will be parented using techniques that protect the child's self-esteem, enhance personal growth and development, encourage responsibility, and strengthen the relationship between resource parent and child.
- Appropriate consequences are to be established prior to a child's inappropriate behavior. Consequences are relevant to the nature of the wrongdoing, and reasonable in duration in accordance with the child's age and development. It is important for the child to recognize the connections of the consequence to the behavior.
- Children may not be subjected to verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, or threats of removal from the Resource Family home.
- Consequences should be consistently enforced yet be flexible enough to reward a child for appropriate behavior.

According to PA State Regulations, the following discipline policy must be adhered to when administering discipline to a resource child:

- Passive physical restraint techniques are the only allowable method of physically intervening with an uncontrollable child's behavior. All interventions requiring passive control techniques must be reported to the AdoptionLinks/JFS coordinator within 24 hours using a written incident report form.
- All abusive forms of punishment are prohibited, including:
 - ✓ Use of corporal, degrading, or vindictive punishment.
 - ✓ Punishment for bedwetting or actions related to toilet training.
 - ✓ Delegation of punishment to another child.
 - ✓ Denial of meals, clothing, or shelter.
 - ✓ Denial of elements of the Service Plan or the Individual Service Plan, such as scheduled visits or phone calls with the birth parents.
 - ✓ Assignment of physically strenuous exercise or work solely as punishment.
 - ✓ Restraint by any method other than passive physical control techniques.

Resource parents will sign an acknowledgement that they have received a copy of the Discipline Policy, have discussed the contents with their caseworker, and agree to abide by the Policy.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Education

Children who receive services from AdoptionLinks/JFS shall be enrolled in, or have access to, education in conformance with the Public School code of 1949 (2-4 P.S. SS 1-101-27-2702). The current school administration and the county Children and Youth agency will determine if transfer to the Resource Family's local school or continued schooling at the prior school is best for the child, under federal law. This is called a BID meeting, or Best Interest Determination. If the child remains in the current school distance, then transportation will be arranged, or you will be paid to transport the child to and from school until the end of the school year.

If the decision is made to transfer the child to the local school district, the Resource Family Coordinator is responsible to ensure the Resource Parents have any documents necessary to register the child in their local school district. This may include but is not limited to: a copy of the court order for dependency and/or placement into the home; the child's most recent report card, the child's most recent IEP; and letter from this agency identifying the family's address and status as a foster parent of said child.

During the course of the foster care placement, any school transfers and placements must be approved by the agency. The Resource Family Coordinator must be kept apprised of the child's progress in school including provision of a copy of each report card and any IEP updates. Resource Parents are responsible to inform the Resource Family Coordinator whenever the child receives a suspension from school.

The Resource Parents are encouraged to speak with the Resource Family Coordinator regarding any concerns they may have about the child's educational placement. Resource Parents are **NOT** permitted to act as "surrogate parents" for signing IEP's or other forms regarding educational due process paperwork with the permission of the county caseworker and the school district. This is assigned to the person with educational rights to the child. However, Resource Parents should attend parent-teacher conference and may sign report cards or other items of a routine nature. They should also inform the Resource Family Coordinator and birth parents, if involved, of meetings. If in doubt, please check with your coordinator – **DO NOT SIGN**.

Children placed in AdoptionLinks Resource homes are only permitted to be home schooled or to participate in a Cyber Charter School with the permission of the county caseworker. Enrollment in a private religious school is acceptable with the approval of the county caseworker; however, all fees are the responsibility of the resource family.

All dependent children are entitled to participate in the Free School Lunch Program.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

As part of the 2014 Federal “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act,” Resource Parents were granted certain rights for decision making for foster children placed into their care. The law gives the following definition this standard:

“Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard”
the standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

This law was created to allow foster children to experience more “normalcy” in childhood. This is seen as a way to encourage development of relationships that might discourage the child from leaving foster care prematurely, and risking homelessness, poverty, or being lured into sex trafficking behaviors. The following are some examples of decisions Resource Parents can make for and with their foster children.

1. Participation in extracurricular activities, including sports, scouts, cultural activities, etc.
2. Attend parties, school dances, and sleepovers in non-foster homes or as part of school or religious participation
3. Enrollment in a driver’s education course, and learning to drive, as long as the foster parent is willing to accept financial responsibility for the student driver at the time the permit is obtained and own a car of their own.
4. Obtaining a hunting or fishing license and participation in hunter safety courses.
5. Going on vacation with the Resource Family or other relatives, with court permission for out of state travel as required
6. Go to day camp or sleep away camp
7. Learn to boat or rock climb
8. Change clothing style or grooming style
9. Be left with a “babysitter” while the Resource Parents are away from home or allow the child to stay with a babysitter or family friend as informal respite.
10. Own a cell phone and have access to social media with the Resource Parent’s knowledge and permission.

JFS of Greater Harrisburg Resource Family Program

Birth Family Visitation

State and federal law requires that all birth parents be allowed a minimum of one hour visit at least bi-weekly from the time of dependency until either reunification occurs or termination of parental rights is ordered by the court. The exception to this is if such visitation would not be in the child's best interest, or if a birth parent is considered a danger to the child. Pennsylvania state law also requires at least monthly contact with birth siblings, either independent of birth parent visits or as part of the same visit.

Visits with members of the child or youth's birth father, or other significant individuals in the child's life, should be outlined in the child's Individual Foster Care Service Plan (IFCSP). The service plan may include visitation for the purpose of reuniting the child with his or her family of origin, to allow the child the opportunity to maintain his or her identity, or to realistically re-assess the necessity of placement, and the birth parent's ability to safely care for the child. Visits are planned events and are sometimes supervised by the county agency staff, an extended family member, or another professional organization assign to this responsibility.

Visitation schedules will vary in frequency and duration according to the court order and provisions defined in the Family Service Plan created by the county children and youth agency. This may include a birth parent being required to drug test negative prior to a visit or required to confirm the morning of the visit that they will attend, or a rule that they may not bring other people or certain foods to the visits. If you have concerns, please share them with the Resource Family Coordinator and the Children and Youth Caseworker.

Resource Parents may never cancel a visit with birth parents as discipline.

Day and overnight visitation with designated persons must be conducted with consideration to the future plans for the child and any mental health treatment, along with the progress the birth parent(s) have made in meeting the court ordered reunification efforts. Arrangements must be made with prior approval of the Children and Youth Caseworker. At no time may the foster child be "dropped off" with a birth parent, even for a brief visit, without prior permission of the county.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Birth Parent Relationships

Please remember that the child's birth parents will be part of their life, even if only in memory, from the date of placement going forward. They may have positive memories mixed in with their experiences of abuse, neglect, and abandonment, and many children hold out hope that their birth parent will get their lives on track and reunify with them, while also wishing for permanency with your family. PLEASE remember that until a court formally terminates the parental rights of any birth parents, they retain the right to participate in their child's life, including visitation, participating in service planning, and working towards reunification. Only a court can alter or stop these interactions.

State regulations mandate that the birth family be provided with the address of the child's physical location. This information can **only** be withheld if the disclosure can be documented as a threat to the health and well-being of the child or persons providing care (resource parents), or if the disclosure is limited or prohibited by court order.

Birth parents also have the right to participate in the development of the Individual Foster Care Service Plan as well as participate in the care of their child as deemed appropriate through the Family Service Plan and Individual Service Plan, until the court terminates their parental rights. Birth parents will be invited to all Service Plan review meetings and encouraged to attend and participate unless parental rights are terminated by the court. If the birth parent is not to be in your home or lives at a distance, they may participate virtually or meetings can be held in the JFS offices, if they wish to attend in person.

We encourage Resource Parents to work to create positive co-parenting relationships with the birth parents, for the benefit of the child. This may include sharing the child's gains, such as learning new skills, bringing up a school grade, or being chosen for a sports team. This might also include sharing information regarding medical appointments or school events when it is safe and appropriate for the birth parents to participate. Additionally, birth parents may be able to provide information that will help the Resource Parents to develop a positive relationship with the child, such as favorite foods, a toy needed to sleep well, a food allergy, the roots to a fear of dogs, or a tradition that the birth family holds to for holidays or birthdays. This will allow the child to feel safe and understood and allow the birth parent to see the resource parent in partnership with them to meet the child's needs.

Your child may want to have some on-going contact with their birth parent or other relative even after permanency. This does not mean they do not want to stay with you. Please talk to your caseworker about the Court Ordered Post Adoption Contact Agreement process.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Vacations/Overnight visits

The Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards enacted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 2014 allow for all Resource Parents to make decisions about where the children placed into their care go, and with whom they stay. You are permitted to use the standards if you have completed the mandatory training on this topic, and you will have limited liability protection as long as you use the Reasonable and Prudent Standard in making decisions on behalf of the children in your care. You are encouraged to use the Service Planning meeting to make decisions with the team about decisions that may impact the child's time and activities, so that plans may be made to accommodate them.

As the Resource Parent, you should make decisions about your child staying at a friend's house or with your relatives based on what a reasonable parent would do in this situation. If the plans are for one night, it is at your discretion.

If you plan to allow the child to stay for more than one night with a friend or relative, or to travel with a school or community group to an activity overnight, such as a Boy Scout weekend campout, a Church retreat, or a Cheerleading conference out of state, you are to **notify** the county children and youth worker and keep your Resource Family Coordinator informed of where the child will be and how the supervising adult may be reached.

If your family is traveling out of the area for a vacation, and your plans will take you out of state or away from home for an extended period, you will need to **notify** your county caseworker and the Resource Family Coordinator. This is to insure that in case on any emergency, we know where the child will be and how the supervising adult may be reached. **Additionally**, some counties require court permission for the child to travel out of state overnight.

If you are going out of town, and there is a reason for the child to not travel with you, you may identify a friend or relative to stay with the child or for the child to stay with. If you do not have someone who is able to meet the child's needs and care for them, please coordinate with the Resource Family Coordinator to arrange for a respite provider.

We encourage you to consider summer sleep-away camp for children who would benefit from this experience. Again, you are encouraged to discuss this at the service plan meeting, so that the needed funding can be arranged, and any court ordered visitation can be rescheduled while the child is away.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Photography and Videos

As a Resource Parent, you are responsible to take photographs of the child in your home. These pictures serve many purposes, which include:

- Creating life books
- Assisting a child in building his/her identity
- Meeting the request of a birth parent or county caseworker

The Resource Family Program encourages there be at least two different photographs taken of each child in your care every six months. We also encourage every resource family to put a picture of the child in a visible place in the home to help the child feel accepted as part of the resource family.

Under no circumstances may a child's name and/or photo be used in any publication without prior consent by the county agency and/or guardian of the child. Never sign a photo or video release form for a child in placement. If any school or other program sends a release form home, it must be referred to the county caseworker. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) that a Resource Parent utilizes, as the child's picture and legal status is confidential.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Children's Grievance Procedure

All children aged five and above will be provided with information about their rights as a foster child and the right to file a grievance if needed. This information is provided to them in the Child's Foster Care Manual. This manual also includes the steps they should take if they want to "grieve" an issue, along with detailed information about their rights as a foster child. If the child is too young to understand the written material, it is the responsibility of the Resource Family Coordinator to talk to them about these rights.

When a child placed with an AdoptionLinks resource family has a complaint or problem while they are living in your home, they have the right to talk with someone about their concerns and efforts should be made to resolve the problem. These complaints or problems might include feeling that their rights have been violated, feeling they are being treated unfairly, feeling they are being treated differently than other children in the home, etc. When a child is placed in a resource home, the caseworker will instruct them on the grievance procedure. The child must also sign that they have received the grievance policy. If a child is too young to understand and participate in this process, their Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) should be asked to sign for them.

As resource parents, when your child has a problem, instruct them again on this procedure.

1. Encourage the child to discuss the problem. Ask them to be specific, how it makes them feel, and how they would like to see the problem resolved. If the child feels the resource parents did not do anything to resolve the problem or if the problem involves the resource parent, the child should talk with their caseworker.
2. Suggest they write their complaint down, and give a copy of it to you, so that you may talk to them about it. They may also want to give a copy to their AdoptionLinks coordinator, their county caseworker, or guardian ad litem, if their complaints are not resolved by discussion with you.
3. If the caseworker and the resource parent are not able to resolve the problem, the child should be instructed and allowed to talk with Adoption & Foster Care Program Director. If no resolution to the problem occurs, the child should talk with the Executive Director of JFS.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Therapeutic services

It is the belief of the Resource Family Program staff that all children benefit from and deserve therapeutic support to develop skills to manage their behaviors, resolve anger, explore grief and loss, and to have a safe place to talk about their lives and the many transitions and losses they have experienced. We also believe that every dependent child deserves an adult outside their parents so they may talk and explore their feelings about their current placements as well as their hopes and dreams about permanency.

Therapeutic services should be addressed during service planning for all children over age five (5). If a child is in therapeutic services prior to placement in a Resource Family home, all attempts will be to arrange for the same level of therapeutic services after placement. Whenever possible, requests will be made to transfer services for continuity of care. If transfer of services is not appropriate, then service planning should include who is responsible to initiate services and identify appropriate service providers. Therapeutic service should continue until the treating or evaluating professional determine it is no longer necessary.

If a child is placed into a JFS Resource Family home without any on-going therapeutic services, the program policy is that the child must become involved in Individual/Family Therapy with their Resource family or participate in Child Preparation for Permanency with an adoption worker from a local SWAN affiliate agency. These services are to begin within thirty (30) days of the date of placement.

If the family involves the child in Individual/Family Therapy, the child should be seen for a minimum of three sessions or until the parents, therapist, and child (if over age fourteen) determine that therapy is no longer needed. Youth over age fourteen must consent to their own therapy but are encouraged to meet at least three times with the therapist to determine fit and form a relationship for later work, if they decline at this time.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Community Based Activities

It is the belief of the Resource Family Program of JFS that children should be involved with peers in the community, and that their individual interests should be encouraged as a way of building self confidence and self-esteem.

Because of these beliefs, it is the expectation of the program that any child over age five (5) be involved in some sort of community-based activity unless their disabilities preclude participation at this time, such as due to medical treatment or safety issues. This activity should be determined in collaboration with the child and based on their individual interests and the availability of the activity in their community. Activities are to be incorporated into the child's individual placement plan, as part of the service plan meetings.

Appropriate activities include organized school or community recreational sports teams; religious activities such as Sunday School and youth group activities; Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts; clubs offered by the school or a community center based on a common interest; art, music, dance, karate, drama, etc. lessons offered by individuals or organizations in the community; and volunteer experiences such as time spent at a hospital, animal shelter, or public library. In addition, youth in care may participate in "normal" activities such as babysitting, part time work, or contact sports if they so desire.

The Reasonable and Prudent Parenting standards created by the state legislature in 2014 provide resource parents with the ability to identify and initiate participation in activities for all foster children as long as they have completed Reasonable and Prudent Parenting training, and use the standards described in the training to identify age and developmentally appropriate activities for the children in their care.

Any costs of participation are to be incurred by the Resource Family unless other arrangements are made prior to payment of fees. The issue of fees should be discussed as part of the service planning process.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Participation in Religious Activities

The Resource Family program recognizes that participation in organized religious activities can be an important part of childhood learning and growing. Due to this belief, all reasonable attempts will be made to support children to continue participation in activities within the denomination of their choice or upbringing, if the child states a preference for this denomination. This may include Resource Parents transporting a child to religious services, Sunday school programs, or youth group activities in a denomination different from their own, if the child states a strong preference and comfort level for participation in that institution. The Resource Parent may also request support from the child's chosen religious group for transportation to religious services and activities.

If the child has not expressed a desire to continue participation in the denomination of their own choosing, each resource family is encouraged to have the child participate in these activities at the family's denominational choice.

A child may not have a parent-requested baptism, complete first communion, be confirmed or have a B'nai Mitzvah without the permission of the birth parent, court or Guardian Ad Litem unless the child is of the age to make this decision on their own within their chosen religious practice.



JFS of Harrisburg **Resource Family Program**

Independent Living for Youth in Care

As the Resource Parents to adolescents in care, it is your responsibility to prepare that youth to become independent at some time in their adult life to the extent of their abilities. What supports and services the youth may need to attain a level of independence, and at what age this actually happens, will vary widely from youth to youth. Some youth may transition from your home to a supported living environment, such as a college campus or training program, the Armed Services, a group home or supported apartment setting, or a shared living situation with extended family or friends. With each of these settings, there are skills needed by the youth to be successful in that setting.

As the Resource Parents for that youth, you do not want to set your sights too low or too high. Tricky business, eh? But you don't have to do this alone. You have some resources available, depending on the age of the youth when they are placed with you and their permanency goal. Here are some things you can consider.

First, if the youth in your care turns fourteen prior to being adopted or having a guardian appointed by the court, they will be assessed by the Children and Youth agency (CYS) in the county of dependency for participation in a county Independent Living Program. If they reside a distance from the county of dependency, CYC is still responsible, but they may access services for the youth in the local county. Formal Independent Living Skills programs are meant to teach the youth any number of skills that you can also work on at home. It also provides information and financial support about moving towards independence.

Whatever permanency goal the youth in your home has, you have a responsibility to help them learn the skills to become independent. If they are enrolled in a formal program, you may just need to review the information with them and help with decision-making and problem solving. If they are not in a program, you will need to teach them these skills within the family setting. Think about the skills you needed to move away from your parent's care, and plan on how to help this youth learn them without creating failure.

If the youth in your home will not be adopted or have a guardian appointed, they may stay in the CYC system until they turn 21 or complete an educational, training, or mental health program. In this situation, you will continue to receive a monthly per diem for the youth to help meet their needs, along with financial support for educational and training programs as they are considered a "low-income person" for publically funded programs. Tuition in Pennsylvania State colleges and universities is free to these youth. During their continued stay in care, the court would continue to review the case every six months regarding the need for continued dependency, and the court would continue to have a say

about the youth's plans. The youth may sign for their own medical treatment and incur debt, such as a car or school loan, on their own.

Prior to reaching sixteenh, the youth will meet with you, their Resource Family Coordinator, and their county caseworker to develop a written independent living plan. This plan should address what they plan to do, their financial and physical options, and the kind of support they will need. This plan must address educational, employment, financial, housing and health issues, along with permanent connections and life skills for that youth. The plan will be individualized to the needs of each youth.

The youth will be informed about their ability to remain in county custody until age 21 if they attend school at least part time, or are enrolled in an educational, job training, or mental health program. They will also be informed about adoption and guardianship subsidy options that will be paid until age 21 to any permanent caregiver. Finally, youth should be informed about their right to leave care after age 18, but return to care within six (6) months if they request it, provided they are in an educational, vocational, or job training program or employed at least 80-hours per month.

Part of the independent living plan should address important documents the youth will need as part of independent adult life. A copy of any documents (birth certificate, social security card, health insurance information, medical records, driver's license or state identification card) in county files will be requested, and the team will agree on who will hold on to a packet of these documents in case the youth needs them as an adult. In addition, state law now requires that these documents be provided to the youth at age eighteen. This packet may also include the youth's diplomas, religious documents and baptismal certificates, life book, and addresses of important people in the youth's life. Finally, the CYS worker is required to obtain a credit report for all youth in care on an annual basis, to insure their identify is not misused.