

Resource Parent Handbook

Team Members: It Takes a Village to Do This Work

Team Members

Members of the Child's Birth Family - A child's birth parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles are all potential team members. Ideally, birth family members support the parent or caregiver from whom the child was separated. As a resource parent, you will likely engage directly with family members. You may even be asked to supervise visitation between children, parents, and siblings.



Extended Family or Fictive Kin - Children might have a close relationship with a family friend who is not related (fictive kin). There might also be a relative who was not close to the child but might want to help after learning that the child is in foster care. Fictive kin and relatives can be valuable supports for the child and for the birth parents. CFSA expects social workers to engage fictive kin and extended family as part of a child's team.



Resource Parents - *Your role on the team is critical.* Care and nurturing of children in your home helps strengthen each child's well-being and positive development. You will also be sharing with the rest of the team, including the birth family, some of your daily experiences with the child. This essential information helps the team to develop a better understanding of the child, the progress the child has made, and what interventions and services CFSA might need to put in place.



Social Worker - In addition to ensuring child safety, social workers regularly engage all team members, and assess children, families, and resource parents for needs and services. Social workers are also responsible for updating you on court hearings, inviting you to attend, and reinforcing your opportunity to be heard. If the goal of reunification is no longer possible, the social worker may also ask if you are interested in becoming a permanency option.



Resource Parent Support Worker (RPSW) - The assigned RPSW helps with the transition of a child into your home, placement stability, crisis response, emotional support, skill building, coaching, and advocacy. RPSWs also help with concrete supports, e.g., initial clothing allowances and respite services.



Family Court Judge - Child maltreatment cases usually have one judge assigned



throughout the case. The judge may order services for a child or birth parents, as applicable, and legally set the permanency goal, terminate parental rights, as applicable, and finalize custody, guardianship, and adoptions.

Guardian ad litem (GAL) - The GAL is an attorney appointed by the Family Court to



represent the best interests of the child. GALs may perform a variety of roles, both during and outside of court proceedings, including that of advocate and advisor to the age-appropriate child.

Assistant Attorneys General (AAGs) - The District's Office of the Attorney General



assigns several AAGs to represent CFSA in Family Court and to perform numerous duties on behalf of CFSA in cases related to child maltreatment, e.g., advising social workers on legal issues, preparing for trial, and leading the legal representation of the Agency during neglect trials. These AAGs are co-located at CFSA headquarters.

Attorneys for Birth and Resource parents - A child's team likely includes attorneys representing the child's birth parents. As for resource parents, there are circumstances where you may choose to be legally represented (e.g., if you are interested in adopting the child in your care).



Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) - CASAs are volunteers who agree to invest their time and energy in children after appointment by a Family Court judge. A CASA reports directly to the judge. Reports include the CASA's view of the case status after an investigation, advocating for the child based on those facts, monitoring the case, and often supporting and mentoring the child.



School Staff - A child in school, or even in daycare, can be emotionally attached to a teacher, a coach, a school social worker, counselor, or other staff member. Often these school-based staff can provide a tremendous amount of insight into the child's status and progress, especially since they also spend a great deal of time with the child during the school day. As resource parent, you may be interacting with school staff on a regular basis.



Service Providers - Children in out-of-home care might need an array of services to help them adjust to separation and out-of-home care. Services might range from a school tutor, a mentor, therapist, or a career counselor for older youth. Social workers often invite these individuals to team meetings at any given time throughout the continuum of the child's case. Family members may also be engaged with service providers, including community-based services provided by CFSA's contracted neighborhood Collaboratives.



Remember: the permanency goal for all children is reunification for the first 12 months of a case, unless otherwise stated. We count on you to support the child and the child's goal without bias, judgment, or efforts to sway opinion. Children in your care need to feel that you support their natural love for their parents, despite whatever situation brought them into your home.

Confidentiality

Respect for birth families' privacy and confidentiality is a fundamental right for every child and family served by the District's child and family well-being system. **REMINDER!** *Both DC law and [CFSA policy](#) require that all CFSA staff, resource parents, and contract agencies keep confidential all client information known (in any form). All team members need to respect and honor the privacy of the families and children we serve, including images, names, and circumstances.*

CFSA expects all resource parents to protect the identity of children and families by not posting images or video on social media and by not engaging or otherwise contacting children or families served by CFSA through social media. Doing so puts client confidentiality at risk and is a violation of a child and family's privacy. CFSA expects you to use only secure methods of communication, such as email, telephone, and text messaging to correspond with children in your care, as well as with the child's family members.

Per DC law and CFSA's [Confidentiality policy](#), any individual who knowingly violates confidentiality guidelines is subject to civil or criminal liabilities, including a minimum of a \$1000 fine or imprisonment for a maximum of 60 days, or both. Further, any person who knowingly obtains mental health information from a mental health professional, mental health facility, or data collector, under false pretenses or through deception is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for a maximum of 90 days, or both.

Strategic Communication

Strategic communication...means communicating the best message, through the correct channels, to the right people, at the right time and using feedback from this process to stay focused on...goals.¹

Timing is important! Our best communication occurs when we are clear-headed, thoughtful, and aware of our audience. Long before we speak, we must ask ourselves: What are we sincerely trying to say? What are team members sincerely able and willing to hear? What will they automatically tune out?

¹ <https://www.simpplr.com/glossary/strategic-communications/>
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