FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2027



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**UCAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE
ILLINOIS FOSTER CAREGIVER
BILL OF RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES 2027**

Introduction

UCAN's Annual Implementation Plan outlines how the agency upholds the Foster Parent Law, including foster parent rights and responsibilities. The plan details each right and responsibility with specific examples describing how UCAN ensures they are protected and supported. New for 2027, each right and responsibility also describes the ways UCAN does this well and the challenges or barriers UCAN faces in meeting the standard.

This plan was developed with UCAN foster caregivers and staff at planning meetings on September 24 and October 22, 2026. Questions or comments about this plan may be sent to UCANFostercare.customerservice@ucanchicago.org.

Foster Caregiver Rights:

1. THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY, RESPECT, AND CONSIDERED AS A PROFESSIONAL MEMBER OF THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM.

Foster caregivers are an integral part of fulfilling UCAN's vision and mission for children and families. UCAN's vision is that UCAN leads with transformational interventions so that families and communities can be safe and prosper. UCAN is relentless!

UCAN's Professional Foster Parenting (PFP) team members build meaningful relationships with caregivers by including them in collaborative planning for youth and families. PFP case managers invite foster caregivers to participate in staffings and assist in the development of youth-supportive service plans, behavior management and treatment plans for youth in the Adolescent and Specialized foster care programs, IEP and school meetings, court hearings, discharge planning meetings, staff meetings, therapeutic staffing/meetings, therapy appointments when requested and Administrative Case Reviews (ACR). These meetings usually have two options: in-person or virtual to be more accessible to all parties, individual schedules are also considered.

If unable to attend the abovementioned meetings, foster caregivers can provide feedback in advance and receive a verbal, and sometimes printed summary of meetings, recapping decisions made, and tasks assigned to all persons involved in the child's care. UCAN PFP staff are committed to demonstrating professionalism, respect and courtesy through the following:

- Foster caregivers are kept up to date with the program and staff changes such as a change in case manager.

- Foster caregivers are provided with a phone list of after-hours emergency numbers, contact numbers and email addresses for each worker and several other resources and numbers. UCAN also has a 24-hour number to gain access to a manager in an emergency. A list of important numbers was created in magnet form so that each foster caregiver has these important numbers readily available. This information can also be located in the updated UCAN foster parent handbook that is available as a hard copy and electronic copy for all Caregivers.

- Home and licensing visits are scheduled as far in advance as possible to accommodate the foster caregivers' schedules. They are informed that unannounced visits are possible as a licensing requirement.

- Foster caregivers are contacted timely to report canceled appointments, time changes, or if the worker is running late.

- All UCAN staff are expected to respond to foster parent requests, questions and needs as they arise and return non-emergency emails and phone calls within 30 hours. UCAN created an email inbox for non-emergency foster caregiver requests that is checked twice per day to ensure follow-up for foster caregivers. The email address is UCANFostercare.customerservice@ucanchicago.org. By using an email inbox, we are able to gather data and metrics noting where the issues are and troubleshoot those problems in support of foster caregivers.

- UCAN maintains up to date mailing lists to ensure all foster parents are in receipt of all materials distributed by the agency.

- UCAN requests foster parents' email addresses so that program and training information can be sent to them electronically. Meeting reminders are sent out electronically also. Foster Care staff update phone numbers and email addresses at least twice per year during in-person meetings/trainings (in addition to existing demographic updates).

- UCAN distributes a Foster Caregiver Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis. Results and comments are used to continually improve the foster care program and reviewed with the staff.

During foster parent orientation and during ongoing training events, UCAN encourages foster caregivers to directly contact case managers, licensing specialists, supervisors, or administrative staff with any questions or concerns.

UCAN realizes how integral foster caregivers are to our agency and honors them in the following ways each year:

- Foster Caregiver appreciation events where the foster parents receive various forms of recognition to show continued appreciation. UCAN provided a brunch style event in recognition of Foster Parent Appreciation month in May 2026 so that caregivers could enjoy the event while the children were at school. We also hosted a formal brunch at Fountain Hill Golf Club to celebrate caregivers in August 2026.

- Annual holiday parties and summer events for families and children in foster care to create family bonding.

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- UCAN continues to share resources with foster parents regarding college scholarships, job fairs, community food giveaways, youth and community programming. Eligible youth are assigned an Education Coach that assists youth and Caregivers with resources related to academia and employment. Eligible males 14-23 also have an opportunity to participate in the Life and Manhood program hosted by the Education Department. This program serves as a great support to Caregivers.
- Creation of a website specific to foster parent recruitment where prospective foster parents can learn more about becoming a foster parent. https://ucanchicago.org/ucan-foster

We have several staff across UCAN who are foster and adoptive parents. Experiencing the child welfare system on both sides is helpful, and we encourage staff to share their experiences in order to support current foster families.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Foster caregivers are invited to every meeting about the child in their care, including Child and Family Team meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, court hearings, school/IEP meetings, and treatment planning meetings, with in-person or virtual options so more caregivers can take part.
- A dedicated customer service inbox (UCANFostercare.customerservice@ucanchicago.org) is checked twice a day. UCAN reviews these requests to spot trends and fix recurring problems for caregivers.
- Caregivers told us that a lack of childcare made evening events hard to attend, so UCAN scheduled its 2026 appreciation events, the May 2026 breakfast and the August 2026 brunch, during school hours.
- UCAN invests in professionalism on both sides of the team. Caregivers were offered the DCFS 9-hour training “Working as a Member of a Professional Team” (August 31, 2026), and staff complete ongoing training in ethics, workplace safety, and professional development through Relias and the DCFS Learning and Development Center. UCAN Clinical and Human Resources are also available to support staff and caregivers.
- An annual Foster Caregiver Satisfaction Survey gives every caregiver a voice, and the results are reviewed with staff.

Challenges/barriers

- Balancing high workloads with complex, urgent requests can make it hard for staff to respond as quickly as caregivers deserve.
- During planning meetings, some caregivers said they do not always feel respected as team members and asked that staff respect their schedules. UCAN shared this feedback with all Professional Foster Parenting staff, is identifying de-escalation and conflict-resolution training for staff and caregivers, and requires that caregiver schedules be considered when meetings and visits are planned. Caregivers are encouraged to report any act of disrespect.

2. THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED STANDARDIZED PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND APPROPRIATE ON-GOING TRAINING TO MEET MUTUALLY ASSESSED NEEDS AND IMPROVE THE FOSTER PARENT'S SKILLS.

The required pre-service training, PRIDE Redesign Virtual (PRIDE), is offered on the DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC-30.5 hours) at times convenient for prospective foster caregivers. There is also a .5 Orientation for Caregivers as well. The DCFS Redesign E-learning training is also made available for those caregivers who feel that it is a better fit for them. The LGBTQIA+ class entitled Building Safety and Trust is also required for the initial license and for renewal if not previously completed. Educational Advocacy is offered to foster caregivers as a requirement for ongoing licensing requirements and is provided by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS). DCFS utilizes the foster parent/staff training model.

In addition to the state pre-service and in-service training requirements, UCAN, as a Council on Accreditation (COA) accredited agency, has additional requirements based on the level of care the foster caregiver is interested in providing. The training is provided by UCAN, DCFS or other external partners.

Adolescent Foster Care

- Sexual Abuse
- Behavior Management
- Medication Management and Log
- Caring for Children Who Experience Trauma
- Various training topics to address the children's special needs
- Risk Reduction Training-Safe Sleep
- CPR/First Aid
- Ongoing LGBTQIA+ Training
- Educational Advocacy
- Adoption/Guardianship Readiness Training *

Specialized Foster Care

- Sexual Abuse
- Behavior Management
- Medication Management and Log
- Caring for Children Who Experience Trauma
- Various training topics to address the children's special needs
-
- Risk Reduction Training-Safe Sleep
- CPR/First Aid
- Ongoing LGBTQIA+ Training

- Educational Advocacy
- Adoption/Guardianship Readiness Training *

Traditional and Home of Relative Foster Care

- CPR/First Aid
- Risk Reduction Training-Safe Sleep
- Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma
- Nurturing Parenting Program*
- Educational Advocacy*
- Ongoing LGBTQIA+ Training
- Additional training is accessed in collaboration with the agency and foster caregivers.

*UCAN has the Nurturing Parent Program-Caregiver that is required for caregivers who are fostering a child between the ages of 0-5.

DCFS offers a ten-hour virtual PRIDE training to relative caregivers on the Learning and Development Center and in-person HMR training classes. HMR families are encouraged to complete the non-relative PRIDE training as well.

The KIND Act, that was signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker on February 5, 2025, is a support that allows more flexibility in supporting families who are interested in placement of their relatives. UCAN encourages full licensure whenever possible but also understands that some relatives may not want to pursue this option. The KIND Act provides comparable compensation and more flexibility to reduce barriers to placement.

The licensing specialist creates a training plan with foster caregivers to ensure all training requirements are met as well as to encourage feedback from the individual foster caregivers about their own training needs. Foster caregivers are encouraged to attend training that they believe will enhance their parenting abilities or fulfill their specific training needs to better support the children in their care. Training topics may also be suggested by case management staff based on needs they identify in working with caregivers. UCAN works with Be Strong Families, DCFS foster parent support team and others to provide additional innovative training. Opportunities to participate in trainings outside of DCFS ie hospitals, schools and other social service entities are encouraged and foster parents can capture these outside training hours on the Training Credit approval form provided by DCFS; when this form is completed and approved by DCFS; training hours can be captured on the Learning and Development Center where their individual training transcripts are documented. This allows Caregivers the power to keep track of their own training hours and classes to better support their continued learning

UCAN has an on-going in-service training program. This training is offered a few times per month, during the week. The training coordinator sends regular notices of upcoming trainings to foster caregivers through mail, e-mail, phone calls and advises foster caregivers of upcoming training opportunities during the monthly foster caregiver meetings. UCAN requires the following *additional* in-service training hours for each foster caregiver listed on the license depending on

the program they serve.

- Relative and Traditional Foster Care 12 hours annually
- Specialized Foster Care 27 hours annually
- Adolescent Foster Care 27 hours annually

Additional child specific training courses are created and available as needs arise. Medical training is also provided by hospitals where children receive their care prior to placement and ongoing if anything changes with the child's medical condition. During the FY27 planning cycle, foster caregivers identified trainings that they are interested in, and we are scheduling guest speakers to attend future monthly meetings to present on substance misuse, how to navigate the court system and what different court hearings mean and how to support youth diagnosed with Autism

UCAN has a Lending Library, which enables foster caregivers to receive additional training hours by viewing DVDs or reading books in their own home. UCAN also has an online training platform, Relias, which is shared with foster caregivers and DCFS makes foster caregivers aware of the other training opportunities across the State via schools, hospitals, libraries, and other social service agencies.

Assessment of training needs is conducted by Licensing Specialists during their scheduled visitation with licensed Foster Parents and ongoing throughout the year. Also, assessments occur during Foster Parent meetings and through Foster Parent satisfaction surveys.

UCAN will use a newly developed Foster Caregiver Mutual Assessment Training Tool (see Appendix A) to identify individual strengths, training priorities, and additional support needs. The assessment will incorporate caregiver self-assessment, licensing specialist observations, case management feedback, child-specific needs, and information gathered through foster caregiver meetings and satisfaction surveys.

Training needs will be reviewed during licensing visits and at least annually. Additional assessments will occur when a child's needs change significantly, when a caregiver accepts a placement requiring specialized skills, or when a placement concern indicates that additional training or support may be beneficial. Assessment results will be documented and used to develop or update the caregiver's training plan.

UCAN will continue to support a co-training approach in which foster caregivers and agency staff share responsibility for preparing and supporting foster caregivers. Experienced foster caregivers may participate in pre-service training, caregiver orientation, monthly meetings, and specialized training sessions by sharing practical experiences and strategies. UCAN will seek input from the Foster Parent Advisory Council regarding training topics, delivery methods, and opportunities for caregiver participation.

Training needs, participation, and completion will be monitored by licensing staff and reviewed by program leadership to identify outstanding requirements and opportunities to improve caregiver preparedness and placement stability.

The Agency supports and encourages Foster Parents to participate in the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council. There are three UCAN Foster Parents on the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council and additional foster parents who attend when they can. UCAN Foster Parents created a UCAN Foster Parent Advisory Council that continues to operate.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Training fits caregivers' lives. DCFS and UCAN now offer sessions on Friday mornings and evenings, Saturday evenings, and Sundays, and in response to caregiver feedback most training was shortened from 3 hours to 2 hours so caregivers with young children can attend without disrupting their households.
- UCAN partners with Be Strong Families, Advocate Medical Group, Lurie Children's Hospital, other hospitals and social service groups, and DCFS, and offers its own online platform (Relias) and a Lending Library. UCAN staff are compliant with all DCFS-mandated training.
- New for 2027: the Foster Caregiver Mutual Assessment Training Tool. Each caregiver and their licensing specialist complete it together at least once a year to build an individual training plan.
- Experienced caregivers co-train alongside staff at orientation, monthly meetings, and specialized sessions.
- For example, foster parent Andrea Powell co-facilitates UCAN's Foster Parent Advisory Board meetings with staff throughout 2027, as shown on the attached training calendar.
- The Foster Parent Law now gives foster parents the right to timely training to meet the hair-care needs of the children in their care. UCAN provides hair and skin care training for caregivers serving children cross-culturally, and staff help caregivers access additional instruction and resources when a child's hair-care plan calls for it (see Responsibilities 19(4) and 32(17)).

Challenges/barriers

- Engagement is the biggest challenge. Getting caregivers to attend training, as well as educational meetings, Child and Family Team meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, and court, remains a focus. UCAN prepares and supports caregivers before these meetings.
- Caregivers of youth in Specialized and Adolescent Foster Care need more youth-specific clinical support, because many of these youth need intensive mental health and substance use treatment. Caregivers asked for de-escalation, cultural awareness, and autism training, UCAN is working to secure verbal de-escalation training for staff and caregivers, and two caregivers are currently testing an online course.

3. THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED AS TO HOW TO CONTACT THE APPROPRIATE CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE TO ACCESS SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE.

At the time of placement, the foster caregiver receives a placement packet, which outlines the current service needs of the child (ren) and the providers of those services as per The Children and Family Services Act (20 ILCS 505/5 (u) . In this packet, the foster caregiver also receives the name and phone numbers of the assigned case worker and supervisor who will be addressing the child's service needs, along with resource numbers.

UCAN also has an after-hours emergency number, (312) 464-2878, that is provided to foster

parents. This is the number for after-hours and weekend emergencies. All staff members are accessible by cell phone during business hours, and foster caregivers often contact supervisors and managers after-hours utilizing their cell phone numbers.

In the event of an emergency, the after-hours service will contact the appropriate case manager. If contact with the case manager is unsuccessful, the after- hours service will then follow the chain of command for contact: Supervisor, Director of Adolescent Foster Care (AFC), Associate Vice President, and Senior Vice President. Each foster parent also receives a copy of the foster care program organization chart with phone and email addresses.

The program hosts "meet and greets" twice per year so that foster caregivers and new team members can get to know each other. During the FY27 planning cycle, foster caregivers met new members of the professional foster parent team since there have been new team members hired during the planning year. The FY27 Meet and Greet was held at the September 24, 2026, foster parent in-person meeting where several UCAN team members attended and introduced themselves in addition to UCAN staff who provide specialty supports in education, parenting, and administration.

UCAN provides foster parents with other important phone numbers including:

- Caseworker
- Supervisor
- Senior Managers
- UCAN main number
- UCAN emergency line
- UCAN Foster Care Associate Vice Presidents, Senior Vice President, and AFC Director's cell phone numbers
- Advocacy Line
- Office of the Inspector General (OIG)
- Medical Card Hotline
- Daycare Referrals
- IDCFS Payment Unit
- Child Abuse Hotline
- IPS/Crisis Line
- CARES Line
- UCAN staff
- WIC offices
- DCFS Medical Consent Line
- YouthCare Liaisons

Phone numbers are routinely updated and distributed to caregivers via board checks, mail, and email. All of this information is captured in the updated Foster parent handbook.

In 2025, UCAN added a program called Mobile Crisis Response to its array of services. Foster parents and staff can access MCR as a first line of assessment and stabilization when youth are

experiencing a crisis. This adds a supportive layer of programming for caregivers, and this support has resulted in more timely assessment and treatment. The Agency also uses formal resources such as Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS), Screening Assessment Support Services (CARES/SASS)**,** and general counseling to provide Foster Parent support. Agency staff are expected to provide this support during home and virtual visits, returning phone calls timely, encouraging Foster Parents to take an active role in caring for children, providing an avenue where Foster Parents can meet with other Foster Parent support groups and responding to Foster Parent concerns with respect and urgency. The relationship between Foster Parents and providers is essential in facilitating the care of children in the foster care system. In 2026, a Foster care Clinical supervisor was added to the team to provide additional support to the Foster Care team and the Caregivers. Other partnerships, such as with Hartgrove Hospital and Maryville, were also added to expedite youth in care receiving psychiatric care and hospitalization.

Ways UCAN does this well

- A 24/7 after-hours line, (312) 464-2878, follows a set chain of command up to the Senior Vice President.
- Every caregiver receives a phone list, a magnet with key numbers, an organizational chart, and the updated Caregiver Handbook.
- Mobile Crisis Response (added in 2025) and a new Foster Care Clinical Supervisor (added in 2026) provide faster support during a crisis, and hospital partnerships help youth receive timely psychiatric care.
- "Meet and greets" twice a year introduce caregivers to new staff.

Challenges/barriers

- Like other child welfare agencies, UCAN struggles to find services for youth with serious behavioral, mental health, and substance use needs. UCAN works with YouthCare, its own clinical programs, and hospital partners to build individual treatment plans, including education and skill-building for caregivers.
- Most caregivers reach their workers and supervisors directly by cell phone, so the after-hours line is rarely used but remains available as a backup. Because staff changes can quickly make contact lists out of date, UCAN updates the phone list and the Caregiver Handbook whenever staff change.

4. THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE TIMELY REIMBURSEMENT COMMENSURATE WITH THE CARE NEEDS OF THE CHILD AS SPECIFIED IN THE SERVICE PLAN.

UCAN issues monthly compensation to foster caregivers for providing foster care on the third Friday of each month. This compensation is for the care provided in the previous calendar month. During the FY25 planning cycle, a decision was made to begin e-payments, or ACH, payments to foster caregivers instead of paper checks.

UCAN began using the payment platform, RAMP in FY26. The previous platform, CorPay did not work out for UCAN or caregivers overall, so a decision was made to find a new financial platform. The foster caregivers report that RAMP is working much better for them and they are receiving

their monthly board payments on time, and sometimes, early. The benefit of having direct deposit for the caregivers is that they have more immediate access to their funds, and they do not have to arrange to pick up their paper check.

UCAN will monitor foster caregiver reimbursement to ensure that payments are issued according to the established payment schedule and reflect the applicable authorized rate for the child's placement and level of care. The program will coordinate with Finance to verify that placement information, effective dates, level-of-care changes, and approved additional services are communicated accurately and promptly.

Foster caregivers may report payment questions or discrepancies to their case manager or the designated program contact. The Associate Vice President will coordinate with Finance to investigate and resolve reported discrepancies, with a target of resolving payment issues within 72 hours. When resolution within that timeframe is not possible, the program will communicate the status of the issue and the anticipated next steps to the caregiver.

UCAN will monitor payment timeliness, payment accuracy, direct deposit participation, and the time required to resolve discrepancies. Findings will be reviewed with program and Finance leadership to identify recurring issues, improve payment processes, and communicate necessary corrective actions to foster caregivers.

The agency will also communicate applicable board rates, eligibility requirements for additional services, and the process for requesting reimbursement or financial assistance during caregiver training and other appropriate communication opportunities.

UCAN provides a full continuum of foster care services, which allows a child to be supported on various levels according to their needs. Prior to a child’s placement in a foster home, the foster caregiver is informed verbally what program the child is in and the corresponding monthly payment.

Respite is available when planned for extended periods (vacation, family illness) by a provider of the foster caregiver’s choosing, on the condition that the identified respite provider passes background screening (Traditional Foster Care only). UCAN caregivers in the Traditional and Home of Relative programs are encouraged to serve as respite resources for one another. This respite is paid through the foster caregiver board payment or is paid by the foster parent directly to the respite caregiver.

Foster parents supporting children who are Specialized and in the Adolescent Foster Care Program receive 15 hours of respite monthly, provided by trained agency respite staff or a trained resource identified by the foster parents. Foster parents asked that we consider a general respite provided for each child so they can take a break during the year. This respite would not come out of their Board payment. Children and youth with medical needs require trained respite providers in their specific medical conditions. We can increase respite hours for foster caregivers when special needs arise, either for their or the children’s health. UCAN assumes financial responsibility in these instances.

If problems arise related to a foster caregiver’s board payment, the foster caregiver may contact

the case manager first, and may also contact the supervisor, AFC Director, or Associate Vice President of Foster Care, who shall then work with the foster caregiver to resolve payment issues as soon as possible. Foster caregivers identified that there were too many steps in this process, so we changed the hierarchy so that one person from the program, the Associate Vice President, troubleshoots payment issues with UCAN's Finance team. This has helped to resolve issues at a quicker rate for foster caregivers.

As appropriate and based on needs (as detailed in the client service plan or treatment plan), UCAN will pay camp and/or special services fees per child. To access these additional services, the foster caregiver should contact the child's case worker. Foster caregivers are also eligible for special service fees, graduation fee reimbursement, reimbursement for supervising sibling visits and parent child visits. With each of these, the foster caregivers turn in documentation to receive the special service fee as set by DCFS. DCFS flex funds are also available.

For children who require more care than traditional service support, the foster caregiver may contact their caseworker. The caseworker will initiate a DCFS Clinical Staffing, formerly called a Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) when a child requires a higher level of care (Specialized or Adolescent foster care) by listening to the foster caregiver and acknowledging the caregiver's ability to advocate for the child in their care. Every effort is made to stabilize children in their current placements.

During the calendar year, a specific training session is held to review the payment policy, including amounts for various ages and levels of care, special fees that are available, and to review the process for resolving payment questions.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Payments go out on the third Friday of each month by direct deposit through RAMP. Caregivers report that payments arrive on time, and sometimes early.
- Caregivers said there were too many steps to fix a payment problem, so UCAN now has one point person, the Associate Vice President, who works directly with Finance, with a goal of resolving issues within 72 hours.
- Caregivers are told the program and monthly payment before a child is placed, and the FY27 board rate chart is attached to this plan.
- Additional payments are available, including respite, camp, special service fees, graduation costs, supervising sibling and parent-child visits, and DCFS flex funds.

Challenges/barriers

- UCAN's earlier payment platform caused delays, which led to the switch to RAMP. A few caregivers still raised payment concerns this year. UCAN reminds caregivers they can sign up for the RAMP portal to receive alerts when funds are deposited.
- Statewide staffing shortages make community respite providers hard to find. UCAN pays respite providers that caregivers identify.

5. THE RIGHT TO BE SUPPLIED A CLEAR, WRITTEN UNDERSTANDING OF A PLACEMENT AGENCY'S

PLAN CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF A CHILD IN THEIR HOME. INHERENT IN THIS POLICY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT ACTIVITIES, WHICH WILL PROMOTE THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIS OR HER OWN FAMILY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Foster caregivers are invited to attend Child and Family Team Meetings and other staffings for children (ren) in their home to discuss strengths, successes, issues, concerns, or problems and develop a plan to resolve and address presenting problems. Foster caregivers are viewed as an integral part of the planning process. Their active participation and input is valued and incorporated in the development of the service plan. In advance of the Administrative Case Review (ACR) the assigned case manager will discuss with the foster caregivers the permanency goal and the service plan tasks for which they are responsible**. UCAN recognizes the value in supporting the relationship between caregivers and birth families and have added a Family Finder worker that focuses on supporting these relationships through education and empowerment. Monthly birth parent meetings are held that include activities around vision boards, medication, trauma and engagement. Birth parents are welcome to participate in UCANs Annual Christmas party and summer engagement activities. This new addition is supportive and has added value in a very challenging area.**

If a child's permanency goal is changed, the case manager will inform the foster caregiver in a phone call or face-to-face conversation during a home visit. Foster caregivers are also encouraged to attend both court hearings and ACR's not only to get information, but also to have a voice in the planning process.

The caseworker will notify the foster caregiver if the change to the permanency goal necessitates changes to the visitation and service plan or to the foster care placement. While the children's needs must be given primary consideration, case managers make reasonable efforts to accommodate the schedules and interests of caregivers when planning parent-child and sibling visits. The caseworker will document discussion of Administrative Case Reviews in the case file and provide foster caregivers with their portion of the child's service plan.

Caseworkers help establish, when possible, comfortable opportunities for caregivers and biological parents to share information and communicate about the child's needs and coordinate visiting arrangements. As both foster caregivers and biological parents gain comfort and trust, the case manager will support and encourage increased communication and cooperation toward the goal of reunification or biological parent support for another permanency option.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers are invited to Child and Family Team meetings and staffings. Before every Administrative Case Review, the case manager reviews the permanency goal and the caregiver's tasks with them, and caregivers receive their portion of the service plan.
- UCAN added a Family Finder position and holds monthly birth parent meetings to build relationships between caregivers and birth families. Birth parents are also invited to the holiday party and summer events.

Challenges/barriers

- Building trust between caregivers and birth parents takes time, and caregivers said they sometimes have to argue about visits. Caregivers are encouraged to attend quarterly Child and Family Team meetings, which can be held more often if anyone on the team sees a need, and caregivers can request staffing at any time.

6. THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED A FAIR, TIMELY AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION OF LICENSING COMPLAINT ISSUES AND BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A PERSON OF THEIR CHOOSING PRESENT DURING THE INVESTIGATION AND DUE PROCESS; THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST AND RECEIVE MEDIATION AND/OR AN ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF DECISIONS CONCERNING A LICENSING CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN SPECIFICALLY EXPLAINED AND TIED TO THE LICENSING STANDARD VIOLATED.

UCAN maintains written procedures governing the handling and investigation of allegations involving foster caregivers, including the agency's responsibilities when allegations of child abuse or neglect are reported and the process for addressing other alleged licensing violations.

The procedures will be provided to foster caregivers during the licensing process and reviewed during appropriate pre-service or ongoing training. Licensing staff will explain the caregiver's applicable rights, including the right to have a person of their choosing present during interviews when provided by the governing procedures, the investigation process, notification of findings, and applicable review or appeal options.

Caregivers will be informed how to obtain a copy of the procedures and whom to contact with questions. UCAN will document policy distribution and applicable training or acknowledgment in the caregiver's licensing record.

When procedures are revised, UCAN will communicate material changes to foster caregivers and provide additional explanation or training as needed. Licensing leadership will periodically review the procedures and related documentation to support consistent implementation and ensure that caregivers understand the process.

UCAN's policy regarding allegations of licensing violations and the appeals of those investigations follows DCFS Policy and Procedure 383. UCAN policy is as follows:

When a complaint is received that a foster caregiver has allegedly abused or neglected a foster child in their home, the Department of Children and Family Services (Division of Child Protection) is notified immediately through a hotline call. At its discretion, DCP shall conduct a child abuse or neglect investigation in accordance with Part 302, Services Delivered by the Department. UCAN can also determine whether to launch an independent concurrent licensing investigation. When notified and as appropriate, UCAN will notify the foster parent when a hotline call is being/has been made or if a licensing complaint has been filed. UCAN contacts the foster parent via phone or in-person to discuss this confidential matter The Licensing worker

will review with the alleged offender the details of the report privately along with the overall process. The rights of the foster parent regarding their participation, support and right to appeal are explained. If an alleged perpetrator has additional questions related to the process, the Licensing worker will oblige. All parties to the incident will be interviewed confidentially. Timelines will be explained to the family and opportunities to ask questions are ongoing. The Licensing Specialist shall document this consultation and license investigation using the DCFS CFS 596 Series License Complaint Report forms.

When an immediate unannounced home visit is not necessary (same day), the Licensing Specialist will conduct an unannounced home visit at the foster parent's home within 2 business days of the date the complaint was received in the Licensing department. In accordance with Foster Parent Law (20 ILCS 520), DCFS Procedures 383 and Rule 340, Foster Parent Code, the foster parent is given 4 hours to find an advocate/friend who can be present during all interviews with the licensee(s) during the investigation. The foster parent can choose to waive the right to have an advocate present. If the respondent refuses to allow the Licensing Specialist to conduct the licensing investigation, UCAN will then consider recommending revocation of the foster caregiver's license. The respondent will be notified by mail on the following business day of an attempted visit and of UCAN's recommendation to revoke the foster home license. The respondent will be given a 24-hour deadline by which to cooperate with the licensing investigation.

During the announced or unannounced visit, the Licensing Specialist will clearly indicate the foster caregiver the visit's purpose. The complaint is documented on the CFS 596-02 Notice to Owner/Licensee or Governing body of licensing complaint this form documents the alleged violation of the licensing standards. The violations from Rule 402 are listed individually and specifically on the form and given to the Caregiver prior to the start of the investigation. Before the event the foster parent is informed of the right to have an advocate. Please note, The Licensing specialist must speak with the youth; even if the foster parent is not prepared with an advocate or support person. The Licensing Specialist will conduct non-accusatory, impartial fact-finding interviews with all people identified in the complaint as having information about the allegations and other people who may have relevant information and document interviews. The Licensing Specialist will also speak to all caseworkers who have a child placed in the home.

The licensing staff with the case management staff will take all necessary actions to protect the children in care, including implementing a Protective Plan, DCFS form CFS 596, and a licensing monitoring schedule is completed if needed.

If at any time during the investigation of a licensing complaint, it is determined that the licensee is in violation of a licensing standard that puts the child in placement in imminent danger, the child will be removed immediately. UCAN staff shall provide the foster caregiver with a "Notice of Decision" immediately, as well as an IDCFS Service Appeal Brochure. The notice of decision will serve as formal notification to a licensed foster caregiver that the agency has made the decision to remove a foster child (ren) from their care.

The investigation will be completed within 30 days of the date received in the Licensing unit. A 30-day extension can be requested by the licensing specialist. If needed, another 30-day extension can be requested, but can only be granted by DCFS. The license complaint investigation results/conclusion will be finalized after the DCFS Child protection investigation is completed and received by UCAN.

If the home is to be placed on hold, licensing supervisor or Associate Vice President will submit a CFS 2011 "Placement Hold Request" by email to the DCFS Associate Deputy Director for Licensing.

The licensee is notified of the findings, Unsubstantiated or Substantiated in a letter. If there are violations found during the investigation, all violations are stated clearly, and a protective plan and/or corrective action plan is put into place. The foster parent has 60 days to correct all violations. The Licensing staff will assist foster parents with getting back into compliance with IDCFS Rule 402.

If the finding of a license investigation is substantiated, a supervisory review is offered to foster parents. The foster parent has 10 days from the date that they receive the letter with the substantiated results to request a supervisory review. The supervisory review gives the licensee(s) an opportunity to discuss the situation, question any violations documented by the licensing specialist, and/or when the licensee disagrees with the violations. When the licensee requests a supervisory review, the licensing supervisor must schedule the informal review within 14 days of the request and hold the review at the earliest date. After a review is conducted, the foster parent is given a written letter containing results of the supervisory review and any changes to the corrective plan within 10 days of the supervisory review.

The Licensing Supervisor informs foster caregivers that if they are unsatisfied withthe results or outcome of the supervisory review, they may request an informal reviewwith DCFS.

A Foster Parent has 10 days to submit a written request for informal review with DCFS.

After the licensing investigation is completed, UCAN submits the complaint packet to DCFS A & I Licensing Representative. When the DCFS license representative approves the investigation and findings, the foster parent(s), complainant, all caseworkers who have a foster child placed in the home, and the GAL for each foster child in the foster home are notified of the results of the investigation in writing.

The licensing investigative packet and all relevant documentation is maintained in the foster parent file along with the licensing complaint and corrective action plan with appropriate follow-up dates and next steps if applicable.

In regards, to stand- alone complaints alleging violations of licensing standards and/or rules internally once a UCAN licensing complaint form is received, most commonly by Case management, the Licensing Supervisor and Licensing Specialist shall determine whether an immediate in-person home visit is necessary to ensure the safety of the children in care or preserve evidence of the alleged violations. The licensing worker will address concerns with the

family. If corrections are needed; licensing will submit the performance improvement plan to both the family and to the UCAN Foster Care management team. The infraction will be reviewed during a critical decision meeting and noted in the file. The licensing worker/case management team will work in tandem to ensure that the improvements are made within the allotted time. Licensing worker and Case Management staff are available to assist with any barriers to the families' success with the professional intent to strengthen the family and provide the optimal placement for the youth.

Ways UCAN does this well

- UCAN responds to hotline calls right away and coordinates closely with DCFS Child Protection, case workers, and clinical staff so that youth and families are safe and supported.
- Caregivers learn the process during licensing, at PRIDE training, and at every January Rule 402 review, and it is in the updated Caregiver Handbook. This includes their right to a support person of their choosing, the timelines, and how to appeal.
- The timeframes are clear: a home visit within 2 business days, the investigation completed within 30 days, and a supervisory review scheduled within 14 days of a request.

Challenges/barriers

- Because many youth have complex needs, investigations can happen even in homes that are doing everything right, and the process is stressful for caregivers. UCAN continuously educates caregivers on Rule 402 and works to build enough trust that caregivers report struggles early, so the agency can help before a crisis.

7. THE RIGHT, AT ANY TIME DURING WHICH A CHILD IS PLACED WITH THE FOSTER PARENT, TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL OR NECESSARY INFORMATION THAT IS RELEVANT TO THE CARE OF THE CHILD.

To ensure that foster caregivers receive information relevant to the care of the child, both UCAN staff and caregivers have responsibilities.

UCAN staff have these responsibilities:

- UCAN case managers in tandem with the entire UCAN Foster Care management team inform foster caregivers of all information available about child (ren) in their care during pre-placement visits/discussions. Upon initial placement. as per The Children and Family Services Act {20ILCS 505/5 (u), information related to the youth(s) educational, social-emotional development
- and/or medical concerns are shared with family. This information can be shared verbally and documented in the monthly case note or completed on the CFS 600-4 form. If the placement is or becomes and adoptive placement, the prospective adoptive parents will be provided with all of the information described in rule 309 Adoption Services, Section 309.150. when additional information is available, and whenever significant changes occur that are relevant to the care of the child the form is updated and reviewed with worker and caregiver. In addition, all Adolescent Foster Care youth are referred to UCAN Behavior Health service for assessment and evaluation. When appropriate, discussions related to any mental health diagnosis are discussed with foster parent

and child. In tandem, all AFC youth have a written behavior plan which is reviewed with caregiver by their assigned clinician. Case managers ensure that referrals are made and services are in place for all youth as per the findings of the integrated assessment. Weekly Treatment meetings facilitated by the Clinical supervisor or assign are conducted to review all services deemed appropriate for youth. These meetings are attended by the case manager, therapist, supervisor, nurse, and AFC Director. Licensing staff and foster parents are also invited as needed. Lastly, Foster Parents must be invited to each Child and Family Team Meeting and Administrative Case Review in a timely manner

- UCAN staff and Caregivers receive on-going training related to disclosure of information rules regarding confidentiality of client information and comply with rules regarding sharing confidential information. Caseworkers are also informed of what is mandated to share with foster caregivers.
- The caseworker and UCAN management team are responsible for keeping the foster caregiver informed of any changes in the child's case plan. This is monitored by supervisors through file reviews and regular supervision meetings.

Foster caregivers have these responsibilities:

- Foster caregivers participate in and are heard in all Child and Family Team Meetings.
- Specialized foster caregivers participate in treatment planning meetings to discuss the most recent progress of and concerns about their child (ren).
- Foster caregivers consult with therapists serving children in their care, to ascertain and understand the special needs of the child and appropriate treatment goals.
- During treatment planning meetings and Child and Family Team Meetings, foster caregivers are encouraged to share information relevant to the child (ren) in their home.
- Foster caregivers exercise the right to elevate issues of communication problems with the caseworker to the supervisory/senior administrator level.
- Via the mutual assessment process, Foster parents are expected to engage in professional development training related to the care of the youth in their home. Opportunities to learn about issues specific to the child in their care and global child-trauma issues related to youth in care are provided in both individual and group settings.

In summary, Case workers visit the home according to the DCFS schedule or as needed. Timely dissemination of information is essential. UCAN uses a team approach to ensure all areas related to the child are covered. This process is mutual in that UCAN expects Caregivers to keep the agency up to date with behaviors and concerns so youth can be properly assessed and interventions are introduced that will bring value to lives of each youth. Unfortunately, this does not always occur. As the agency receives information it is our responsibility to share with the Caregiver. It is also UCANs responsibility to ensure Caregivers are trained in their role as advocates. UCAN is working to ensure that all Caregivers have completed the updated Educational Advocacy training as well as have taken "Working as a Member of a Professional team". Again, UCAN encourages Caregivers to attend all Court hearings, planning meetings, educational conferences to ensure they have the most up to date information. We encourage the development of positive relationships with the guardian et litem and other team members. These staff are a wealth of information.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Information is shared at pre-placement and placement, documented, and updated with

the caregiver whenever significant changes occur.

- Caregivers told us that diagnosis information was not always shared with them. In response, UCAN started weekly treatment team meetings, led by the clinical supervisor, to review services for each youth, and added a Foster Care Clinical Supervisor to support caregivers, workers, and youth.
- All Adolescent Foster Care youth are referred to UCAN Behavioral Health, and each has a written behavior plan that the assigned clinician reviews with the caregiver.

Challenges/barriers

- Sharing information works best when it flows both ways, and caregivers do not always update the agency on behaviors and concerns. UCAN encourages caregivers to attend court, planning meetings, and school conferences, and to build relationships with the Guardian ad Litem and other team members. UCAN is also working to ensure all caregivers complete the updated Educational Advocacy training and "Working as a Member of a Professional Team."

8. THE RIGHT TO BE GIVEN INFORMATION CONCERNING A CHILD (I) FROM THE DEPARTMENT AS REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (U) OF SECTION 5 OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT AND (II) FROM A CHILD WELFARE AGENCY AS REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (C-5) OF SECTION 7.4 OF THE CHILD CARE ACT OF 1969.

As part of the ongoing training curriculum at UCAN, case managers receive training related to disclosure and confidentiality of client information. Caregivers also receive training regarding the management and protection of confidential information. Each caregiver signs a UCAN confidentiality agreement, in which they commit to compliance with statutes, regulations, and policies from DCFS and from UCAN regarding confidentiality. At the time of placement of a child, UCAN case managers provide caregivers with relevant and appropriate information available to them at the time, including case information and history, health and medical/medication information, educational information and history, placement history, and information regarding the child's behavior. Confidential information about the parents or family is not shared except to the extent necessary for the caregivers to support the child.

For youth stepping down from Residential placement, pre-placement meetings and staffings are held to provide as much information as possible to the foster parent to ensure that there is a solid foundation at placement. All services and supports should be in place prior to move-in, to ensure safety and stability on all sides. The program's Intake Coordinator is a bridge between the referral source and the foster parent. Foster parents are also eligible for an enhanced payment for 12 months.

As additional information becomes available, the case manager continues to provide information, both verbally and in writing when available, to the caregiver. Printed documentation to be given to the caregiver includes the child's portion of the service plan, medical documentation, copies of the current IEP, and other available written documentation as required by the DCFS policy guide. The

case worker is mandated to provide the foster caregiver with the remaining information within 60 days through hand or electronic delivery.

During internal file reviews, caseworkers are accountable to ensure that documentation is shared with foster caregivers. If the placement of a child becomes an adoptive placement, the caregiver is provided with additional information regarding the health history of the biological family.

Ways UCAN does this well

- At placement, caregivers receive case history, health and medication information, education records, placement history, and behavior information. Any remaining information is provided within 60 days, and internal file reviews hold caseworkers accountable for sharing it.
- For youth stepping down from residential care, pre-placement meetings and an Intake Coordinator make sure services are in place before moving-in, and caregivers are eligible for an enhanced payment for 12 months.

Challenges/barriers

- Even with careful preparation, some youth stepping down from residential care continue to struggle with emotional regulation, taking medication, and engaging in services, and the move from a group setting to a family setting can be difficult. UCAN supports these transitions with clinical, respite, and nursing services, and connects youth to youth development programs, extracurricular activities, and UCAN workforce and education mentors.

9. THE RIGHT TO BE NOTIFIED OF SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND STAFFINGS CONCERNING THE FOSTER CHILD IN ORDER TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CASE PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS REGARDING THE CHILD IN THEIR CARE, INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PLANNING MEETINGS, ADMINISTRATIVE CASE REVIEWS, INTERDISCIPLINARY STAFFINGS AND INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANNING MEETINGS; THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED OF DECISIONS MADE BY THE COURTS OR AGENCY CONCERNING THE CHILD; THE RIGHT TO HAVE THEIR INPUT ON THE PLAN OF SERVICES FOR THE CHILD GIVEN FULL CONSIDERATION IN THE SAME MANNER AS INFORMATION PRESENTED BY ANY PROFESSIONAL ON THE TEAM; AND THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THE FOSTER CHILD WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TEAM, INCLUDING THERAPISTS, PHYSICIANS AND TEACHERS.

UCAN strongly encourages foster caregivers to attend and participate in all meetings regarding the child(ren) in their care, including but not limited to IEP meetings; discharge planning meetings; psychiatric appointments; medical and dental appointments and family therapy appointments; as well as any other services the child(ren) may be involved in. Upon placement of a child into their home, case managers provide the names and phone numbers of all service providers, the UCAN caseworker, and caseworker supervisor and the licensing team where the Specialized or Adolescent Foster parent received a copy of the foster parent handbook. Over time the agency has identified a need for All caregivers to have a reference book. UCAN has updated the foster parent handbook to include all Foster care programs, resources, phone numbers and storage. This assists in the development of a working relationship where foster caregivers can communicate their knowledge

and observations of the child's behavior, emotional and physical needs. This is also an opportunity for Caregivers to look inward and assess their individual parenting skills. Foster parents can freely express a need for additional training and support.

The foster caregivers are invited by the child's caseworker to attend in-house case staffings when appropriate, and they are always invited to Child and Family Team meetings. If they are unable to attend, caregivers are asked for information that is relevant to the family meeting or staffing, and case managers share appropriate information from the staffing with the caregiver.

Foster caregivers receive written notifications of Administrative Case Reviews from IDCFS. Case managers inform foster caregivers about in-house case staffings, court dates, ACRs and all other appointments regarding children in their care, and they are responsible for assisting caregivers to participate in ACRs and other staffings and court appearances if needed.

Case managers schedule appointments for home and/or virtual visits prior to Court hearings and ACRs and incorporate information provided by the caregiver into the service plan or court report. If foster caregivers choose not to attend court or an ACR, it is the case manager's responsibility to inform the foster caregiver of case progress during home visits and through phone contacts. The importance of the foster caregiver's role and input in court, ACR, and any case staffing is an on-going dialogue addressed during pre-service and in-service trainings and outlined in the DCFS Foster Caregiver Manual.

Case managers encourage and welcome foster caregivers to share ideas, raise questions, and offer suggestions regarding the implementation of appropriate services for the child. These suggestions help UCAN staff make appropriate decisions for the child's service plan.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers are always invited to Child and Family Team meetings and are encouraged to attend IEP, psychiatric, medical, dental, and therapy appointments. At placement, they receive the names and phone numbers of every service provider. This list is monitored and updated as needed.
- Case managers visit before every court hearing and Administrative Case Review to gather the caregiver's input for the service plan or court report.
- UCAN identified that all caregivers need a reference book, so the updated Caregiver Handbook, which was previously given only to Specialized and Adolescent caregivers, now goes to every caregiver.

Challenges/barriers

- Caregivers cannot always attend because of their schedules, and caregivers asked that staff respect their time. UCAN offers virtual options, considers caregiver schedules when planning meetings, and shares a summary with caregivers who cannot attend.

10. THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED, IN A TIMELY AND CONSISTENT MANNER, WITH ANY INFORMATION A

CASEWORKER HAS REGARDING THE CHILD AND THE CHILD'S FAMILY, WHICH IS PERTINENT TO THE CARE AND NEEDS OF THE CHILD AND TO THE MAKING OF A PERMANENCY PLAN FOR THE CHILD. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION CONCERNING A CHILD'S FAMILY SHALL BE LIMITED TO INFORMATION, WHICH IS ESSENTIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS AND PROVIDING CARE TO THE CHILD IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD'S FAMILY. WHEN A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP EXISTS BETWEEN THE FOSTER PARENTS AND THE CHILD'S FAMILY, THE CHILD'S FAMILY MAY CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

During the placement process/meetings, the foster caregiver is informed verbally or in writing, of the child(ren)'s permanency goal and current family relationships in addition to all the other information given to them about the child. UCAN staff and the foster caregivers also discuss visitation rights and schedules for both parents and siblings. Details are not shared with the foster caregivers regarding the biological parents' progress or the content of their service plan. The case manager provides updated information within 60 days of the date of the placement, as latest information becomes available.

During the placement process/meetings, the foster caregiver obtains information about the child (ren) that includes family information. This may include information about in-utero drug and alcohol exposure, family medical history (to ensure that foster caregivers are aware of physical and emotional challenges of the parent, and which may be inherent in the child) and any history of abuse and neglect, physical or sexual abuse. Information disclosed about the parent only contains parts of the shared history of the parent and the child, which is pertinent to, and impacts the care of the child. On-going information received by the case manager or other service providers in regard to the child's physical, emotional, educational, or behavioral needs will be shared with foster caregivers during regular home visits and phone contact.

UCAN case managers encourage foster caregivers to meet and talk with biological parents before and after parent/child visits when appropriate. A UCAN caseworker may help facilitate a meeting between foster caregivers and parents. In specific instances, it may be necessary to solicit consent from parents to share additional information with foster caregivers. Issues of permanency and confidentiality are also initially explained and addressed in PRIDE training. Foster caregivers are required to sign a confidentiality statement.

UCAN has two positions that help with scheduling Child and Family Team Meetings, finding community resources, locating family and prospective placements, and promoting parent engagement-Family Finders. They coordinate a parent support group each month that provides guidance around what to expect during court processes, how to maximize the visiting time with children, how to advocate for changes in certain areas and other issues important to parents.

Ways UCAN does this well

- At placement, caregivers learn the child's permanency goal, family relationships, and visitation schedules for parents and siblings, with updates within 60 days.
- Two Family Finders and a monthly parent support group help build positive relationships, and case managers help arrange meetings between caregivers and parents.

Challenges/barriers

- UCAN must balance caregivers' need for information with the family's right to confidentiality. Staff and caregivers both said caregivers should have as much information as possible. When a positive relationship exists, UCAN may ask parents for consent to share more.

11. THE RIGHT TO BE GIVEN REASONABLE WRITTEN NOTICE OF ANY CHANGE IN A CHILD'S CASE PLAN OR OF A PLAN TO TERMINATE THE PLACEMENT OF THE CHILD WITH THE FOSTER PARENTS AND OF THE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE OR TERMINATION OF PLACEMENT. SUCH NOTICES SHOULD ONLY BE WAIVED IN CASES OF A COURT ORDER OR WHEN THE CHILD IS DETERMINED TO BE AT IMMINENT RISK OF HARM.

A notice of Decision CFS151 can be shared with the Caregiver to document any decisions made in regard to the Caregivers' involvement with the Department. It cites the IDCFS rule and policy that lead to the decision. The caregiver has a right to appeal the decision 1. An optional mediation where Caregiver and Department discuss the differences with a third party 2) a fair hearing. The request for an appeal will need to be made within 45 days to Administrative Hearings Unit, Department of Children and Family services 406 E. Monroe Street Springfield, Il 62701.

When all attempts for stabilization and/or corrective action plans have not worked out, it is UCAN's practice to follow IDCFS policy and give a foster caregiver a 14-day written notice, ("Notice of Placement Change CFS 151-b) for the removal of a child (ren) from their care. The Notice of Change of Placement 151-Bcites the reason the decision was made and how to appeal the UCAN decision to remove the child (ren). This is via the Clinical Placement Review at 866-225-1431If the foster caregiver decides to file an appeal, they have three business days to do so. The number that they need to file the appeal is provided on the "Notice of Decision CFS 151" form. The appeal is then scheduled with a DCFS clinical staffing team within 5 days. After the staffing takes place, the clinical team has 10 days to make their decision. UCAN adheres to the final decision of the clinical reviewer

If there is a determination of imminent risk to the child in care, the foster caregiver is notified immediately, and the child (ren) is removed from the foster home. A child may be immediately removed from the caregiver's home when his/her behaviors pose a serious risk of harm to themselves or others, including risk to the caregiver, or when the Juvenile Court orders that a child be removed immediately. No notice to Caregiver is needed.

When the caregiver is requesting the removal of a child from the home, UCAN also requests 14 days advance notice. This allows time for matching and planning for the youth. Prior to removing any child (ren) from a foster home, unless imminent risk is determined, a case manager scheduled a meeting. The placement meeting includes the case manager and supervisor. The caregiver may also be asked to participate in this meeting, to determine whether the disruption of the placement may be avoided.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers receive 14 days' written notice (CFS 151-B) that explains the reason for a move and how to appeal, including the Clinical Placement Review number, 866-225-

1431, and the timelines: 3 business days to file, a staffing within 5 days, and a decision within 10 days.

- Before any planned move, a placement meeting looks for ways to keep the child in the home. UCAN also asks caregivers for 14 days' notice so a good match can be found for the youth.

Challenges/barriers

- When a child is at imminent risk or the court orders an immediate removal, advance notice is not possible, which is hard on caregivers. Licensing and case management staff work closely with caregivers afterward to provide support.

12. THE RIGHT TO BE NOTIFIED IN A TIMELY AND COMPLETE MANNER OF ALL COURT HEARINGS, INCLUDING THE DATE AND TIME OF THE COURT HEARING; THE NAME OF THE JUDGE OR HEARING OFFICER HEARING THE CASE, THE LOCATION OF THE COURT PROCEEDING AND THE COURT DOCKET NUMBER OF THE CASE AND THE RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN COURT PROCEEDINGS OR SEEK MANDAMUS UNDER THE JUVENILE COURT ACT OF 1987.

It is UCAN's practice for case managers to inform foster caregivers of the purpose and date of hearings at Juvenile Court. Case managers notify foster caregivers during regular home visits or through phone contact. Case managers are also responsible for counseling caregivers on their need to virtually attend court or to obtain waivers of appearance when necessary. Case managers provide caregivers with the names and phone numbers of the Guardian ad Litem assigned to the child in their care, and the contact information for any assigned CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer. Supervisors monitor caseworkers' contacts and communication with foster parents as a regular part of supervisory meetings. Completion of documentation and sharing of information with foster parents is included in agency file review processes. Foster caregivers receive in-service training regarding their rights and responsibilities in juvenile court proceedings.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Case managers tell caregivers the date and purpose of each hearing during visits and calls, help them attend virtually or get a waiver, and give them contact information for the Guardian ad Litem and any CASA volunteer.
- Supervisors check caseworker contact with caregivers in regular supervision, and file reviews confirm that information was shared.

Challenges/barriers

- Court attendance remains a focus area. Caregivers asked for training on navigating the court system and what different hearings mean, and UCAN is scheduling guest speakers for upcoming monthly meetings.

13. THE RIGHT TO BE CONSIDERED A PLACEMENT OPTION WHEN A FOSTER CHILD WHO WAS FORMERLY PLACED WITH THE FOSTER PARENT IS TO BE RE-ENTERED INTO FOSTER CARE WHEN SUCH PLACEMENT WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD AND OTHER

CHILDREN IN THE HOME.

When a child re-enters the foster care system, UCAN gives priority to the previous foster placement. Consideration of re-placement includes review of the case file by the child's caseworker and the case management supervisor, as well as a review of the foster caregivers' licensing file. The caseworker will use history to determine whether re-placement of the child is in the best interest of the child and other children in the home. The offer to replace the child in the foster home is contingent upon determination within a staffing.

If the child is verbally and cognitively able to contribute input as to their preference in returning to the home, consideration as to why the child left the home previously, the success of the placement in the home, and the current ability of the foster caregiver to meet the child's needs are discussed. DCFS has also created a FARE interview process, and the case manager can now access information on previous placements from the child/youth's lens that can help determine if approaching a previous caregiver is an option.

UCAN practices an extensive matching and pre-placement process as well as operating a continuum of care that includes step down of children from more restrictive settings to a previous foster caregiver when appropriate. UCAN meets weekly with DCFS and the foster care management team to assess for Intake and plan for stabilization of homes. During this period, different homes are considered for the placement of the child. The placement determination is made during pre-placement staffings.

Ways UCAN does this well

- When a child re-enters care, UCAN gives priority to the previous foster home, reviews the case and licensing files, and considers the youth's own preference, including information from DCFS FARE interviews.
- UCAN meets weekly with DCFS on intake and placement stability.
- Success story: two youth who had returned home re-entered care several years later. Their previous foster family wanted them back but did not have room, so the family built an addition onto their home. The placement remains successful.

Challenges/barriers

- A previous caregiver may no longer have the space or capacity to take a child back, as in the example above. When a family wants a child back, UCAN works with them on what it would take, as in the example above, where the family expanded their home.

14. THE RIGHT TO HAVE TIMELY ACCESS TO THE EXISTING APPEALS PROCESS WITH THE CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCY. THE ASSERTION OF THE ACCESS TO APPEAL WILL BE FREE FROM ACTS OF HARASSMENT AND RETALIATION.

In addition to the UCAN grievance procedure described below, UCAN also participates fully in the current IDCFS Appeal Process and provides foster caregivers with the IDCFS Service Appeal Process brochure at the time of placement. UCAN offers training regarding the service appeal process at

least once a year, during the training session regarding the Foster Parent Implementation Plan.

We inform foster parents that no harm will come to them or their family, and no retaliation of any kind will be taken by anyone when a foster parent exercises their right to voice their dissatisfaction about services of any kind.

UCAN encourages foster caregivers to request phone/virtual or in-person meetings with Supervisors and the Associate Vice President of Professional Foster Parenting to discuss differences of opinion in the case plan. Supervisors and the Associate Vice President will carefully consider the foster caregivers concerns and will decide based on best practice and interest of the child. UCAN staff and administrators continually assure caregivers that they will not experience any negative ramifications, or retaliation, for bringing grievances or appealing service decisions made within the foster care program.

UCAN Grievance Procedure

If a foster caregiver believes they are being treated unfairly or that one or more of their rights have been violated, they have the right to address their concern with agency staff and/or file a grievance. If necessary, the foster caregiver may have their concerns heard by the agency's President/Chief Executive Officer. Certain procedures must be followed in the grievance process:

The grievance procedure, along with other UCAN consents, are given to the foster parent at the time of licensure and can be requested at any time from the licensing department. In addition, Foster parents can file a grievance at any time and have the freedom to contact the DCFS Advocacy Office. This information in tandem with information related to the Foster Parent Hotline and Office of inspector General is given to Caregivers during Pride Pre-Service training and upon placement of a youth. Lastly, the grievance procedure is discussed annually at the 402-licensing refresher training

(This is a statement from the 402-licensing refresher training)

"If you feel you are not being fairly treated by your caseworker, please contact the caseworker's supervisor. If you still don't feel you have resolved the issue, please contact the foster care director. You may also seek assistance from the licensing worker and the licensing supervisor. If you still feel that there is no resolution to the issue, please refer to the grievance forms in the packet. You always have the right to file a grievance when you feel your foster parent rights have been violated or if you feel mistreated in any manner. **You can not file a grievance regarding any content of 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, Child Care Act, or UCAN's Foster Parent Rights or Responsibilities. "Retaliation for filing a grievance is prohibited.**

1. Speak with Your Service Provider

If any issue or concern arises, the foster caregiver should first speak with their service provider, the case manager or licensing specialist. Many problems can be resolved when the staff member knows how the caregiver feels.

2. Step A: Submit a Written Grievance to the Supervisor

If the issue is not resolved, the foster caregiver may complete a grievance form or put the grievance in writing and submit it to the PFP Caseworker Supervisor (for case management concerns) or the PFP Licensing Supervisor (for licensing concerns). Caregivers may ask a staff member they trust, or a member of UCAN's Quality Improvement department, for help. The grievance will be reviewed and the outcome provided to the caregiver in writing within 10 days.

3. Step B: Associate Vice President or Director of Adolescent Foster Care

If the foster caregiver is not satisfied, they may submit the grievance to the Associate Vice President of Foster Care (Case Management, Permanency, and Family Support) for case management concerns, or to the Associate Vice President of Foster Care (Licensing, Training, and Development) or the Director of Adolescent Foster Care for licensing concerns. The team may call a staffing or meeting to resolve the situation, and the foster caregiver has the right to have an individual of their choosing present for support.

4. Step C: Vice President of Quality Improvement, Impact, and Analysis

If the foster caregiver is still not satisfied, they may submit the grievance to the Vice President of Quality Improvement, Impact, and Analysis, who will convene a meeting of all necessary parties, up to and including the President/Chief Executive Officer, to review the grievance.

5. Step D: President/Chief Executive Officer

If the foster caregiver is still not satisfied, they may continue the appeal in writing to UCAN's President/Chief Executive Officer, who will render a final decision in writing within 10 working days. Copies of the grievance, including the final decision, are kept by Quality Improvement and in the foster caregiver's licensing file.

The UCAN Foster Caregiver Grievance Policy in no way affects the foster caregiver's ability to file an appeal through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. To ensure that the foster caregiver's rights to a service appeal are upheld, UCAN will provide the foster caregivers with all necessary information on the policy and procedure regarding filing a service appeal.
UCAN had no formal grievances submitted by Caregivers during this planning period.

Ways UCAN does this well

- UCAN has written grievance procedures for case management and licensing, in English and Spanish, with clear steps up to the President/CEO. Caregivers may bring a support person to any staffing, retaliation is prohibited in writing, and copies of every grievance and decision go to Quality Improvement.
- Caregivers receive the DCFS Service Appeal brochure at placement, and UCAN offers

service appeal training at least once a year.

- Foster parents are assured that if they file a grievance that they will not be prohibited from future placements.
- No formal grievances were filed by caregivers during this planning period.

Challenges/barriers

- The process works only if caregivers feel safe using it, and caregivers have shared that they worry about retaliation or being passed over for future placements if they file a grievance. Caregivers said they value being able to ask a trusted staff member, including UCAN's Quality Improvement team, for help without fear of retaliation, and UCAN repeats this message at every annual review.

15. THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED OF THE FOSTER CAREGIVER HOTLINE ESTABLISHED UNDER THE ACT AND ALL THE RIGHTS ACCORDED TO FOSTER PARENT CONCERNING REPORTS OF MISCONDUCT BY DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES, SERVICE PROVIDERS OR CONTRACTORS, CONFIDENTIAL HANDLING OF THOSE REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL.

During PRIDE training, foster caregivers are given a copy and provided training on their Rights and Responsibilities and the Foster Caregiver Hotline. A copy of the Foster Caregivers Rights and Responsibilities is kept on file at the agency and can be accessed at any time. UCAN's Implementation Plan, in English, is available on our agency's website for anyone to view at any time. In addition, brochures regarding the service appeal process, the IDCFS Office of the Inspector General, and IDCFS Advocacy Office are mailed to foster caregivers and are readily available at the agency. On-going training is provided to assist foster caregivers with utilizing IDCFS services. As part of the placement packet, the Foster Caregiver Hotline number, the number for the Child Abuse Hotline and the rights of the foster caregiver are included.

Other numbers that are provided include:

- ❑ Caseworker
- ❑ Supervisor
- ❑ Senior Managers
- ❑ UCAN Main Number
- ❑ UCAN Emergency Line
- ❑ IDCFS Advocacy Office
- ❑ IDCFS Office of the Inspector General (OIG)
- ❑ Medical Card Hotline
- ❑ Daycare Referrals
- ❑ IDCFS Payment Unit
- ❑ Child Abuse Hotline
- ❑ Foster Caregiver Hotline
- ❑ CARES Line
- ❑ YouthCare Liaisons

All of this information is contained in the updated Foster parent handbook

Ways UCAN does this well

- The Foster Caregiver Hotline number, the Child Abuse Hotline number, and caregiver rights are in every placement packet and in the updated Caregiver Handbook.
- Brochures on the Office of the Inspector General, the DCFS Advocacy Office, and the service appeal process are mailed to caregivers, and this plan is posted on UCAN's website.

Challenges/barriers

- No challenges or barriers were identified for this right this year.

Foster Caregiver Responsibilities:

16) (1) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO OPENLY COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM.

During PRIDE training, the licensing process, and ongoing, foster caregivers are affirmed that they are an integral part of the child welfare team. They are encouraged to be open with case workers and other appropriate service providers about what is happening with the child in their home. Foster caregivers are informed about significant events that require immediate notification of the agency and may require a call to UCAN's 24-hour emergency line.

UCAN provides opportunities for foster caregivers to share on-going information through frequent and regular home visits by the child's case worker. Foster caregivers receive training to be able to effectively advocate for their children in court hearings and school staffings, foster caregivers are strongly encouraged to participate in school staffings, quarterly Child and Family Team meetings, discharge planning meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, and Court Hearings. Foster caregivers in the Specialized Care or Adolescent Foster Care programs are expected to participate fully as members of the clinical treatment team in quarterly treatment planning meetings.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Frequent home visits, a 24-hour emergency line for significant events, and quarterly Child and Family Team meetings give caregivers regular ways to share information.
- Caregivers in Specialized and Adolescent Foster Care take part as full members of the clinical treatment team.
- Foster parents can request a copy of the Grievance procedure and the Grievance form at any time.

Challenges/barriers

- Some caregivers do not check emails often. Caregivers suggested mass text messages, and UCAN is exploring text messaging options for caregivers.

17(2) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RESPECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION CONCERNING FOSTER CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES AND ACT APPROPRIATELY WITHIN APPLICABLE CONFIDENTIALITY LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

Foster Caregivers receive the Foster Caregiver Manual at Pre-Service training; outlined in this manual is the Department's policy on confidentiality. Additionally, the issue of confidentiality is reiterated annually during trainings, home visits, and other structured events like Administrative Case Reviews and Court. Foster caregivers sign a UCAN confidentiality agreement at the time of licensing, indicating their acceptance and agreement to abide by rules and requirements regarding confidentiality and we support the foster caregivers in navigating areas where they may need more information in order to care for the youth in their homes.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Every caregiver signs a UCAN confidentiality agreement at licensing and receives the DCFS policy in the Foster Caregiver Manual. Confidentiality is reinforced every year at trainings, home visits, Administrative Case Reviews, and court.
- UCAN requires regular training for staff and caregivers on boundaries, workplace conduct, ethics, and HIPAA.

Challenges/barriers

- Many caregivers and staff have long histories with UCAN, which builds strong relationships but can also make it easier to overstep boundaries. Staff can always consult their supervisor about what information can be shared and with whom.

18(3) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE.

UCAN strongly encourages foster caregivers to advocate for children who are in foster care through involvement with juvenile court proceedings, participation in Administrative Case Reviews, Child and Family Team meetings, discharge planning meetings, treatment planning meetings, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings, and IEP meetings. They know the children's day to day needs the best.

All licensed foster caregivers are required to attend the Educational Advocacy Training, which is part of UCAN's in-service training curriculum. This enables the foster caregiver to participate more fully in their child's educational plan. Foster parents are encouraged and expected to participate in school conferences, IEP staffings, and other meetings regarding the educational services being provided for children in their care. UCAN case managers, and sometimes supervisors, support them in school meetings to ensure that their concerns are heard.

UCAN encourages both licensed caregivers and unlicensed relative foster parents and those seeking to become licensed to participate in all available training courses. Foster caregivers are provided training on court, service appeal procedure, and Administrative Case Reviews during PRIDE. On-

going training courses covering these topics are also offered throughout the year, and service appeal brochures are readily available. Caregivers can access Educational Coaches via UCAN if they need more assistance navigating the education system. Additionally, case managers are trained in procedures related to accessing DCFS educational liaisons for challenging cases.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Educational Advocacy training is required for all licensed caregivers. Case managers, and sometimes supervisors, attend school meetings with caregivers so their concerns are heard.
- Caregivers can use UCAN Education Coaches to assist with challenging school issues. Experienced foster parents can act as surrogate parents or support Caregivers with less experience working with the school system. If issues become extreme, case managers are trained to reach DCFS educational liaisons for difficult cases.

Challenges/barriers

- Navigating the court and education systems can be overwhelming. Caregivers asked for more training on the court process, and UCAN is scheduling guest speakers for upcoming monthly meetings.

19(4) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TREAT CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH DIGNITY, RESPECT AND CONSIDERATION.

UCAN recognizes that hair care is an important component of a child's health, dignity, self-expression, and cultural identity. During placement planning, case management staff will discuss the child's hair-care needs and preferences with the child and appropriate members of the child's family or care team, consistent with applicable requirements.

UCAN will identify any training, products, techniques, or community resources needed to help the foster caregiver meet the child's hair-care needs. When additional training is necessary, staff will assist the caregiver in accessing appropriate instruction and resources.

Case management and licensing staff will reinforce the importance of culturally responsive hair care during caregiver contacts, training, and placement planning. Relevant needs, resources, and follow-up activities will be documented in accordance with agency procedures and applicable requirements.

UCAN is proud to announce the newly developed “Glow Up” Hair Studio located in UCAN’s Residential Program. It is accessible by any UCAN youth. The UCAN Glow Up salon/barber shop is dedicated to affirming youths’ identity, culture and dignity.“

The responsibility to treat children and families with dignity, respect, and consideration is addressed in PRIDE training and through the licensing process. UCAN also has an in-service training curriculum, which more fully addresses issues related to the natural family. These concepts include:

- ❑ Impact of Placement on the Foster Family
- ❑ Cultural Diversity and Self Awareness
- ❑ Understanding the Birth Family
- ❑ Stress Management
- ❑ Grief, Loss, and Attachment

Caregivers are also encouraged to participate in agency-wide in-service training that explores each of these topics more fully. Case managers and therapists help caregivers understand the challenging behaviors their children may show from childhood experiences and complex trauma. Caregivers are assisted in implementing behavioral strategies to more effectively address and positively shape those behaviors.

UCAN is also committed to the goal of cultural diversity and inclusion. Training sessions are provided to assist caregivers in gaining greater awareness of and appreciation of the richness of cultural diversity, and to enhance their ability to effectively serve children and families that identify with cultures, racial identities, religious beliefs, or sexual orientations different from their own. When a child with a different cultural background or heritage is placed in the home, the case manager works closely and openly to assist the caregiver in showing support, respect, and sensitivity to the child's cultural background.

Through in-service training and continual support from licensing and case management staff, foster caregivers are also encouraged to embrace the role and importance of families of origin in the lives of children in their care. Caregivers are helped to become gradually more comfortable in efforts to more actively support reunification and the maintenance of strong family ties between the child in care and the biological family.

Case managers are required to nurture relationships between children in foster care and their birth families and support their cultural heritage during home visits. Caseworkers are also required to place comments in the case notes verifying that children, their birth families and their cultures of origin are being treated by foster caregivers and UCAN staff, with dignity and respect. Supervisors are required to address these issues with case workers during regular staff supervision. Licensing staff also ensure foster caregivers are and understand licensing standards during licensing monitoring visits. In addition, annual client satisfaction surveys are completed by foster families regarding the above issues. Parents also complete client satisfaction surveys.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Each youth's hair-care needs and preferences are part of placement planning, and UCAN's "Glow Up" salon and barber shop is open to all UCAN youth.
- In-service training covers the birth family, cultural diversity, grief, loss, and attachment. Caseworkers document, in case notes, that children and their families are treated with dignity, and both foster families and parents' complete satisfaction surveys.

Challenges/barriers

- Supporting a child's relationship with their birth family can be emotionally hard for caregivers. Training related to family reunification, empathy and bias can help Caregivers engage in healthier connections with birth families. Licensing and case management,

along with the newly developed family finder, can help caregivers grow more comfortable supporting reunification and family ties over time.

20(5) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILIAL STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO ACCEPT A CHILD INTO CARE, RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN SUPPORT NEEDS AND UTILIZE APPROPRIATE SUPPORTS IN PROVIDING CARE FOR FOSTER CHILDREN.

During the licensing process, as well as on-going, foster caregivers are encouraged to evaluate their own strengths in areas in which they need improvement and are given the opportunity to select training to enhance their skills. The licensing specialist and foster caregiver identifies training together which would be beneficial to the foster caregiver in providing care of the child (ren) in their home. Clinical can also provide direction related to the youth's diagnosis and how best to interact with youth based on the illness.

Referrals from the DCFS Case Assignment and Placement Unit for placement of children new to DCFS care come with identified homes. In selection of these homes, priority is given to the location of the home, with preference given to homes closest to the home of the parent. Stated preferences for the child's gender and age and the caregiver's capability to support reunification are considered too. UCAN is certified through All Children All Families and part of this process is providing LGBTQIA+ specific training and support to caregivers and staff.

Licensing staff continually assess foster home strengths with foster caregivers to ensure that the foster home is an appropriate match for the child (ren). For children stepping down from Residential care, foster caregivers, older children/youth and staff discuss the child (ren)'s needs and the foster caregivers' ability to meet those needs prior to and during residential step-down meetings. Older youth are also interviewed regarding their preferences, including family composition and geography. Older youth who are able make their own decision regarding whether to accept placement with a prospective caregiver. During these meetings, foster caregivers are encouraged and supported to openly discuss their concerns about accepting the child into their home, so that the best decision can be made for them and the child. Additional training is recommended and implemented if more skills are needed prior to placement.

UCAN provides additional support to foster caregivers or youth at risk including support groups, nursing, psychiatric care coordination, respite care, and psychotherapy. The case manager is required to assess the strengths and development areas of foster caregivers during each home visit and discuss any improvement areas with the foster parent.

Ways UCAN does this well

- The Mutual Assessment Training Tool, licensing visits, and case manager visits give caregivers regular chances to name their strengths and needs. Placement matching considers location, the caregiver's stated preferences, and the ability to support reunification, and older youth help decide on their own placements.

- UCAN is certified through All Children All Families, which includes LGBTQIA+ Building Safety and Trust training and support for caregivers and staff.
- Example: a caregiver was asked to take a sibling group. After reviewing the children's needs, the support in her home, and the needs of the youth already living with her, she submitted a professional letter, citing policy, declining the placement. This is the kind of self-awareness and advocacy UCAN encourages.

Challenges/barriers

- The need for homes for sibling groups and youth with complex needs is high. UCAN encourages caregivers to discuss their concerns openly before accepting a placement, and recommends additional training when more skills are needed first.

21(6) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BE AWARE OF THE BENEFITS OF RELYING ON AND AFFILIATING WITH OTHER FOSTER PARENTS AND FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CARE AND SERVICE TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

UCAN maintains an active foster parent support group. The purpose of the foster caregiver support group is to provide an opportunity to share concerns regarding program operations and produce solutions. Additionally, the support group provides encouragement for individual caregivers to voice their own concerns and identify their needs.

In addition to serving as a vehicle for communication between caregivers and the UCAN foster care program, the foster caregiver support group may carry out additional functions, such as conducting fund raising activities, organizing foster caregiver events, and acting as a support and information network to the general foster caregiver population. UCAN encourages foster caregivers to serve as mentors for caregivers with less experience and with new placements.

At the foster parents' request, we created a foster parent directory to be shared with all UCAN foster parents. UCAN created a consent form process for those foster parents who wanted their information to be shared. The directory is now available for use and distribution, and updates to the directory are completed at least twice per year.

UCAN provides extensive and frequent in-service training. Foster caregivers are encouraged to participate in these trainings to meet their training requirements and to meet and network with other foster caregivers for support and information sharing. Foster caregivers receive regular e-mail notices of upcoming trainings, in addition to being informed of up-coming trainings during the monthly foster caregiver meetings**.**

During the 2026 event hosted by the Chicago Association of Black Social Workers at UCAN, foster parents were encouraged to join to be a part of their Chapter and learn more about how they support communities and other partners in their work. Foster parents are encouraged to attend statewide DCFS meetings where information is disseminated and social media groups where support can be provided on resources and other subject matters.

Ways UCAN does this well

- UCAN caregivers created their own Foster Parent Advisory Council, and three UCAN caregivers serve on the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council.
- At caregivers' request, UCAN created a consent-based foster parent directory, which is updated at least twice a year.
- Caregivers were invited to join the Chicago Association of Black Social Workers chapter at its 2026 event at UCAN, and experienced caregivers mentor newer caregivers.

Challenges/barriers

- Reaching caregivers who are less connected, including newer caregivers, takes ongoing effort. UCAN uses mentoring, monthly meetings, and training events to connect them with other caregivers.

22(7) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ASSESS THEIR ONGOING INDIVIDUAL TRAINING NEEDS AND TAKE ACTION TO MEET THOSE NEEDS.

UCAN uses the Foster Caregiver Mutual Assessment Training Tool (see Appendix A) as its method and tool for assessing caregivers' general and individual training needs. The tool combines caregiver self-assessment, required training records, licensing observations, case management feedback, placement-specific needs, and caregiver requests. Licensing staff review it with each caregiver at least once a year and update it when new needs come up. The resulting plan lists recommended or required training, available opportunities, completion expectations, and follow-up. UCAN also uses results from individual assessments, training attendance, caregiver meetings, satisfaction surveys, and placement stabilization activities to identify program-wide training needs, which inform the annual training calendar.

Foster caregivers receive training hours for attending monthly caregiver meetings. Outside trainers attend throughout the year to share information and enhance foster caregivers' skill sets. Foster caregivers have access to UCAN's Workplace Learning Department, and they can request training via email or by phone. During the FY27 planning cycle, foster caregivers identified trainings that they are interested in, and we are scheduling guest speakers to attend future monthly meetings to present on substance misuse YouthCare and its enhanced supports like caregiver mileage reimbursement and YMCA memberships, de-escalation training including situational role playing, and how to support youth diagnosed with Autism and developmental delays.

UCAN licensing staff ensures that foster caregivers are not only aware of how many hours they have and how to obtain additional hours both internally and externally, but they also know exactly what mandatory classes they have taken and what mandatory classes they still need. Caregivers are provided with direction and assistance with registering for the DCFS Learning and Development Center . Foster parents will be able to track all of their trainings independently. The opportunity to take relevant courses outside DCFS is also welcomed and training credit can be received by completing and submitting the Training Credit approval form.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers identified the training topics they want, including substance misuse, YouthCare supports such as mileage reimbursement and YMCA memberships, de-escalation with role-playing, and supporting youth with autism and developmental delays. UCAN is scheduling guest speakers for upcoming monthly meetings on these topics.
- Caregivers earn training hours for attending monthly meetings, and licensing staff help each caregiver track completed and required courses on the DCFS Learning and Development Center.

Challenges/barriers

- Tracking hours across the DCFS Learning and Development Center, UCAN trainings, and outside courses can be confusing. Licensing staff review each caregiver's transcript at the 6-month monitoring visit and help with transcript requests at any time.

23(8) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEVELOP AND ASSIST IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES TO PREVENT PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS, RECOGNIZING THE TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS ON A FOSTER CHILD AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE FOSTER FAMILY AND TO PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE FOSTER CHILDREN AND MEMBERS OF THE FOSTER FAMILY SHOULD PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES FAIL AND PLACEMENT DISRUPTION OCCUR.

Through on-going, in-service training ie, Caring for Children who have experienced trauma curriculums have been developed to educate the foster parent(s) in the identification of medical, educational, and behavioral issues of children. These behaviors may contribute to placement disruptions if they are unacknowledged /unaddressed/not treated. UCAN encourages foster caregivers to enable the children in care to participate in one of several UCAN positive youth development programs and to utilize local community programs which provide resources and services that may assist in preventing placement disruption*. For youth in specialized programs or youth receiving mental health services the utilization of Clinical staff is also strongly encouraged to gain deescalation skills and practice appropriate parenting. All youth in UCAN Adolescent Foster care program are referred to Behavioral Health services for assessment and or treatment. All AFC youth, who are eligible, have a behavior treatment plan that is reviewed with Caregiver and youth when appropriate.*

UCAN has a "Shared Living Agreement" process that is used for older youth in care regarding their contributions to the household, agreements around technology, activities, conflict resolution, privacy, daily chores etc. These agreements are discussed in pre-placement interviews and meetings so that expectations are known up front. We are hopeful that by involving both youth and caregivers in creating these agreements, there will be less placement disruptions and tense situations in the home environment due to lack of understanding and communication. This process identifies the areas that the youth needs or wants help in like cooking, proper way to do laundry, etc. so that they are better prepared for independence, which is something that the caregivers noted an interest in helping them prepare for.

UCAN provides support to foster caregivers through frequent home visits where they are encouraged to discuss their successes, strengths, problems, and concerns with the child's

caseworker. The licensing specialist is also receptive to concerns reported by the foster caregivers regarding the placement and reports concerns to the Licensing Supervisor, Case Management Supervisor, and the Associate Vice President of the Program. If the conditions exist which create the possibility of placement disruption, the case manager must convene a Child and Family Team Meeting. This meeting will determine what services are needed to stabilize the placement. Depending on the child and family, the stabilization plan could include respite services, parenting coaching, counseling, psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment, contracting with the child, putting in place a behavior management plan, additional training for the foster caregiver, etc. Continued training workshops are offered which serves as a strategy to preserve placement.

Foster parents receive information in training and through contacts with the case manager about resources and services available to stabilize placements in jeopardy of disruption. If a foster caregiver feels they can no longer provide care for a child, and all placement stabilization and crisis intervention services have not resolved the problems, UCAN requires a 14-day written notice to find a new home but encourages foster caregivers to maintain the placement until another home is found. This typically takes 30-45 days to find a good fit for the youth. Unless there are safety issues involved, continued relationships are encouraged to promote life-long connections versus relational disconnection between a foster caregiver and a foster child.

UCAN staff recognizes disruptions may occur regardless of the foster parent's efforts to stabilize the placement. UCAN assures caregivers that a disruption of a placement will not prevent the agency from utilizing the home again, especially if the caregiver has clearly worked diligently to avoid the disruption and fully helped possible in minimizing the trauma for the child experiencing the disruption. Licensing and case management staff works closely with foster parents following a disrupted placement to assess the reasons for the disruption and to address training or support needs that may enable the foster parent to maintain subsequent placements without disruption. Foster Parents recommended, when appropriate, that a transitional meeting between the original foster home and receiving foster home, occur to share thoughts and strategies on how to best support the child (ren) for their future success.

Foster Caregiver Mentoring/Networking programs are used as a vehicle to provide stabilization support. Foster caregiver meetings can provide directions on how to access appropriate support services, as well as a forum to discuss preventative strategies and stabilization services.

Foster caregivers are also provided with the Foster Caregiver Manual in PRIDE training. Outlined in the manual is DCFS’s policy on placement disruption.
Lastly, UCAN makes every effort to reduce the likelihood of unplanned changes. However, they do occur. In cases, where there is an opportunity to plan the placement change clinical staff and other identified persons can be used to reduce the level of trauma experienced. UCAN promotes a continuum of care model. If a youth changes placement valuable team members remain on the case for 30 days or more depending on the need. Opportuniities for Caregivers, birth parents and staff to meet to discuss the youths transition and what the youth may need during this time is also discussed. If youth have unplanned changes possibly to a hospital or shelter. Workers, birth families and Caregivers, when appropriate maintain visitation. Current service providers are notified of placemtne change and; if possible, the agency will work to maintain some positive level of continuity of care. UCAN is committed to youth feeling “cared for” and “valued” even in times of

significant stress.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Shared Living Agreements set clear expectations with older youth up front, covering chores, technology, privacy, and conflict resolution.
- When a placement is at risk, the case manager convenes a Child and Family Team meeting to build a stabilization plan, which may include respite, parenting coaching, counseling, or a behavior plan.
- If a move happens, key team members stay on the case for 30 days or more, and, as caregivers recommended, transition meetings between the current and new homes are held when appropriate.

Challenges/barriers

- Finding the right new home typically takes 30 to 45 days, and unplanned moves, such as to a hospital or shelter, still happen. UCAN keeps service providers informed and maintains visits with workers, birth families, and caregivers when appropriate, so youth still feel cared for and valued.

24(9) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE IMPACT FOSTER PARENTING HAS ON INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND ENDEAVOR TO MINIMIZE, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, ANY STRESS THAT RESULTS FROM FOSTER PARENTING.

UCAN understands the challenges of foster parenting and the effects it may have on their families. These challenges are addressed during PRIDE training and in the licensing process. During the licensing process, licensing specialists discuss with foster caregivers the changes that foster parenting will have on their family. Licensing specialists help foster caregiver applicants to assess their ability to become foster caregivers and measure the impact it will have on the lives of them and their families. The Licensing Specialist also makes a recommendation, which is documented in the licensing file, regarding the level of care the foster caregiver appears to be equipped to provide. This recommendation is based on the level of commitment displayed by the prospective foster caregiver throughout the assessment process. Additional on-going training is offered to address the on-going needs of foster caregivers.

UCAN also helps to coordinate supportive services to foster caregivers such as respite care, in-home behavior management, and counseling. UCAN created a respite guide to help foster caregivers cultivate respite and back-up caregivers. Foster parents asked that we consider a general respite provided for each child so they can take a break during the year. The statewide staffing shortage of paraprofessional roles has made it difficult to find community respite programs, but the agency provides payment to those respite providers who are identified by the foster caregivers. UCAN utilizes its clinical and counseling services department to provide services with individual or family therapy to assist families in time of crisis. UCAN's clinical department hosts weekly virtual platform support groups for foster caregivers to provide a platform to talk through challenges related to the 24/7 care of children in their home.

During the FY27 planning cycle, continued emphasis was placed on strengthening the identified foster caregivers' back-up caregiver role. Due to unforeseen circumstances and/or children who require psychiatric or other hospitalization, the back-up caregiver's role becomes crucial so that foster caregivers can balance the needs of the youth in the hospital and their household. The wait time for admission for psychiatric care varies, and sometimes youth remain in the emergency room of hospitals for an extended period of time. Foster caregivers must then rely on their back-up caregiver, and the agency also assists, if possible, in covering the supervision in the emergency room. This is an advocacy area for DCFS in terms of crisis management support for youth awaiting psychiatric care.

Respite is also available with supervisory approval for extended periods (vacation, family illness) by a provider of the foster caregiver's choice who clears a background check and receives training and can demonstrate competency if needed for specialized needs. This planning year, the foster parents requested training to break down how respite is utilized and the eligibility requirements. This respite is paid through the foster caregiver board payment. Each family is required to discuss with the child (ren)'s caseworker the development of a respite plan. The plan is dependent on the level of care the child requires (children with special needs must have a trained provider in those identified needs), and the number of children in the home.

Foster caregivers can initiate a "voluntary hold" which means that no children will be placed in their home while this hold is active. It is at the foster caregiver's discretion to determine when this hold will be lifted. UCAN recognizes that from time-to-time foster caregivers may need to take a break from foster parenting responsibilities and ensure foster caregivers are aware that a voluntary hold will not adversely impact their eligibility to receive children.

UCAN provides opportunities for Caregivers to access trainings related to "Compassion Fatigue" to offer support to foster caregivers. The agency also, on a case-by-case basis, involves the caregiver in the foster child's therapeutic sessions to support the relationship between foster caregiver and child. When appropriate, case managers and licensing staff may encourage foster caregivers to utilize outside resources for counseling or other services to meet the needs of the caregiver and his/her family.

UCAN has a Faith and Community Manager, who reaches out to foster caregivers during times of family loss, critical incidents, and general well-being calls. Many caregivers attend a voluntary weekly prayer call for additional inspiration and support. There is also a UCAN gospel choir that Caregivers, birth parents, staff and youth are invited to join.
UCAN is committed to protecting and nurturing every member of the Child welfare team. Practices related to Self-care are strongly encouraged. UCAN has a community gym that is available for staff and youth as needed. UCAN provides a multitude of programs to assist with the stress of day-to-day life struggles that can affect parenting like Tax assistance, Snap assistance, employment, community Medicaid program and BHS services.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Specialized and Adolescent caregivers receive 15 hours of respite each month, UCAN created a respite guide, and caregivers may take a voluntary hold without affecting their

eligibility for future placements.

- UCAN's clinical department hosts weekly virtual support groups for caregivers, and the Faith and Community Manager reaches out during times of loss or crisis. Caregivers are welcome on a weekly prayer call and in the UCAN gospel choir.
- UCAN offers self-care resources, including a community gym, and help with taxes, SNAP, employment, Medicaid, and behavioral health services.

Challenges/barriers

- Statewide staffing shortages make community respite hard to find.
- When a youth needs psychiatric admission, waits in the emergency room can be long, which strains the whole household. UCAN emphasizes strong back-up caregivers and, when possible, helps cover supervision in the emergency room.

25(10) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE REWARDS AND BENEFITS TO CHILDREN, PARENTS, FAMILIES AND SOCIETY THAT COME FROM FOSTER PARENTING AND PROMOTE THE FOSTER PARENTING EXPERIENCE IN A POSITIVE WAY.

UCAN foster caregivers are recognized annually in several ways hosted by the agency. Testimonies from youth in care are often shared during these recognition events; reminders of the positive impact caregivers have on the lives of children. UCAN also provided a breakfast style event in recognition of Foster Parent Appreciation month in May 2026 so that caregivers could enjoy the event while the children were at school. A more formal recognition brunch was provided in August 2026 (Fountain Hill Golf Club) in recognition of caregivers; PFP staff, supporting departments and the CEO were present to honor all the Caregivers. CEO, Christa Hamilton honored the theme of "Super Heroes" and provided time for Caregivers to share their "superpowers' and how they had used these powers to positively affect the youth in their homes.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to be involved in recruiting efforts and are provided with a financial incentive for successfully recruiting a new foster caregiver. In previous years, caregivers have been called to provide testimony before the Illinois legislature, or in legislative hearings regarding the challenges and rewards of foster caregiving. UCAN's Development staff guide and support foster caregivers regarding testifying legislative hearings and presenting foster parenting in conversations with the media.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers are recognized at events throughout the year, often with testimonies from youth. At the August 2026 brunch, the CEO invited caregivers to share the "superpowers" they use with the youth in their homes.
- Caregivers receive a financial incentive for recruiting new caregivers, and UCAN's Development staff support caregivers who share their stories with the media or testify before the Illinois legislature.

Challenges/barriers

- Caregivers said a lack of childcare made recognition events hard to attend, so UCAN now schedules events during school hours.

26(11) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE ROLE, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOSTER PARENTS, OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM, THE CHILD AND THE CHILD'S OWN FAMILY.

UCAN recognizes the importance of informing foster caregivers of their rights and responsibilities and those of other members of the professional foster care team. This information is discussed during PRIDE and in the licensing process. Foster caregivers receive the IDCFS copy of foster caregiver rights in their IDCFS Handbook during PRIDE. UCAN also has an in-service training curriculum, which more fully explains this information to foster parents (the in-service training is available to traditional and home of relative foster parents). UCAN holds "meet and greets" several times a year in which Foster Care staff are welcome to come and share their role and job responsibilities. PFP has hosted the CEO, the CFO, the COO and other important staff members to meet Caregivers as well. Ucan collaterals; for example, members of the Education team have presented at foster parent meetings along with other programs like teen parenting program-Safe Sleep, workforce and violence prevention. Information regarding programs and resources is also included in the foster parent handbook.

The PRIDE training model is implemented with staff and foster caregivers as co-trainers facilitating the curriculum. Open forums are scheduled monthly to discuss the on-going roles of UCAN professional staff. Foster caregivers are strongly encouraged to attend at least two of the open forums each year. The Senior Vice President of Professional Foster Parenting is present during open forums twice a year and sometimes more if needed.

During monthly foster caregiver meetings, UCAN staff are present to address any concerns/issues. The management team serves as the liaison between foster caregivers and the agency to ensure their needs are met. Representatives from IDCFS are also invited to foster caregiver meetings and provide training on relevant topics. UCAN's management staff is responsive to foster caregivers via their presence at foster caregiver meetings, welcoming phone calls, and their availability at staffings requested by the foster parent. Foster caregivers are also included in behavior planning and treatment planning meetings and service plan development.

The IDCFS approved Implementation Plan for the Illinois Foster Caregiver Bill of Rights & Responsibilities is reviewed with foster caregivers to solicit feedback and suggestions from them. Two meetings with foster caregivers were held in September and October, before submitting the revised plan. Foster caregiver recommendations are taken seriously and incorporated with next year's plan revisions.

Ways UCAN does this well

- PRIDE is co-trained by staff and foster caregivers, and monthly open forums and "meet and greets" introduce caregivers to staff, including the CEO, CFO, and COO.
- Teams such as Education, Teen Parenting, Workforce, and Violence Prevention present

at caregiver meetings, and the updated Caregiver Handbook describes UCAN programs and resources.

- Caregivers and staff reviewed this plan together at two meetings, on September 24 and October 22, 2026.

Challenges/barriers

- Families sometimes assume that case management and licensing are the same team. UCAN is clarifying which tasks belong to licensing and which belong to case management, to reduce confusion and delays in services.

27 (12) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW AND, AS NECESSARY, TO FULFILL THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO SERVE AS MANDATED REPORTERS OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT UNDER THE ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILD REPORTING ACT AND TO KNOW THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY'S POLICY REGARDING ALLEGATIONS THAT FOSTER PARENTS HAVE COMMITTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND APPLICABLE ADMINISTRATIVE RULE AND PROCEDURE GOVERNING INVESTIGATIONS OF SUCH ALLEGATIONS.

During PRIDE training and the licensing process, foster parents learn of their role as mandated reporters. Additional in-service training on the topics of mandated reporter requirements and caregiver rights and responsibilities are available annually. During the licensing process or upon placement with a relative caregiver, the foster caregiver signs an acknowledgment of their "Mandated Reporter Status." The foster caregiver is also given a copy of IDCFS Rule 402, which outlines this requirement.

Foster caregivers are made aware that they may be subject to an investigation by the Division of Child Protection or the Licensing Department at UCAN if a call is made to the Child Abuse Hotline involving them as caregivers. This process is explained during PRIDE class, and the licensing specialist also explains this process during the family home study assessment.

Additional in-service training on this topic has been developed to explain more fully what the law requires of both foster caregivers and UCAN staff regarding reporting child abuse or neglect. This training instructs foster caregivers in recognizing what signs and behaviors may indicate that a child has been a victim of abuse, what signs and behaviors must be reported, and to whom they should be reported. This training also instructs foster caregivers that their child advocacy and mandated reporter responsibilities require them to escalate reports to supervisory levels within UCAN or to agencies outside UCAN (such as IDCFS or law enforcement agencies) if they believe it necessary to ensure allegations are adequately investigated and children in their care are protected.

Sexual abuse training and training regarding sexually reactive and problematic behavior in children is offered to educate foster caregivers about the behaviors they may observe and their reporting responsibilities under the Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting Act. Foster caregivers are also informed during the home study process that they must report any concerning behaviors of a foster child to their case manager. IDCFS also added an on-line reporting system to increase ease and access of reporting abuse and neglect.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Every caregiver signs a "Mandated Reporter Status" acknowledgment and receives a copy of DCFS Rule 402.
- In-service training covers the signs of abuse, what must be reported and to whom, and when to escalate a report, and DCFS now offers online reporting.

Challenges/barriers

- It can be stressful for caregivers to learn that a hotline call could involve them. UCAN explains the process during PRIDE and the home study so caregivers know what to expect.

28(13) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW AND RECEIVE TRAINING REGARDING THE PURPOSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE CASE REVIEWS, CLIENT SERVICE PLANS AND COURT PROCESSES, AS WELL AS ANY FILING OR TIME REQUIREMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE PROCEEDINGS, AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THEIR DESIGNATED ROLE IN THESE PROCEEDINGS.

Foster caregivers receive a comprehensive orientation to the child welfare system during PRIDE pre-service training and during the home study and licensing process. During the home study assessment process, the licensing representative encourages the foster caregiver to become involved in Administrative Case Reviews and the court processes to share valuable input about a child in their care. Case managers provide ongoing information on the children placed in the foster home and their specific court and service plan involvement. Lastly, the DCFS Learning Development Center houses trainings related to Life of a Case I and II and other trainings related to Child and Family team meetings, Court protocol and processes as well as other policy related trainings.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers are oriented to Administrative Case Reviews and court during PRIDE and the home study, and case managers help them prepare for each review and hearing.
- The DCFS Learning and Development Center offers Life of a Case I and II and training on Child and Family Team meetings and court processes.

Challenges/barriers

- Attendance at Administrative Case Reviews and court remains a focus area. Virtual attendance has helped, and UCAN is adding guest speakers on the court process.

29(14) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY'S APPEAL PROCEDURE FOR FOSTER PARENTS AND THE RIGHTS OF FOSTER PARENTS UNDER THE PROCEDURE.

Foster caregivers are given the Foster Caregiver Manual in PRIDE pre-service training. Outlined in the manual is the DCFS grievance policy. UCAN distributes their specific grievance policy to all foster caregivers individually at the time of licensure by the Licensing Worker where Caregivers sign UCAN consents that include the Notice of Privacy Practices and Rights, Consent for Services and Health authorizations, Statement of Client Rights and Responsibilities and Grievance Notification Procedure

(a copy of the Grievance form is included). The UCAN grievance procedure is reviewed annually and collectively with all Caregivers. At this meeting the foster parent rights and responsibilities are also reviewed. The meeting is held every January "Annual Rule 402 Licensing meeting". In this annual review meeting the grievance policy is discussed and Caregivers are kept current regarding the processes related to the grievance policy, for example, who to contact to file a grievance, what is the appeal process and what are the timelines. Lastly, these polices are again reviewed in the months of September and October when the licensing Department conducts Trainings that address the previous years' Foster Parent Law implementation in an in-person meeting. Staff are invited and it becomes a collaborative review of the plan where both Caregivers and staff are allowed to provide feedback. Foster parents were reoriented to UCAN's grievance policy in January of 2026

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers receive and sign UCAN's grievance procedure at licensure. It is reviewed with all caregivers every January at the Annual Rule 402 Licensing meeting and again at the September and October plan-review meetings, and it is included in the updated Caregiver Handbook.

Challenges/barriers

- Caregivers often learn the process best when they need it, so licensing also reviews it one-on-one whenever a concern comes up.

30(15) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING ACCURATE AND RELEVANT RECORDS REGARDING THE CHILD'S HISTORY AND PROGRESS AND IS AWARE OF AND FOLLOWS THE PROCEDURE AND REGULATIONS OF THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY WITH WHICH THEY ARE LICENSED OR AFFILIATED.

The topics of health passports and proper record keeping are discussed during PRIDE training and the licensing process. The foster parent is encouraged to utilize an electronic folder to maintain records for each child. For Caregivers who are not technology skilled; Caregivers are encouraged to keep a paper file, binders and folders which are available via the agency if needed for appropriate record keeping. Additionally, Licensing staff support the foster parent by working with them one on one to access training platforms like zoom, Teams and the Learning Development Center as well as teaching basic skills regarding how to utilize their emails and access folders. Foster parents are instructed through Pride Pre-Service training and ongoing In-service training to keep a copy of everything that they receive/submit to and from the agency as well as all documents given to the agency ie. Medical reports, driver's license, insurance cards, etc. During subsequent visits in the first month, the case manager discusses with foster caregivers the importance of documentation of medical issues, any issues with filling medications, and informs foster caregivers what specifically should be documented for children with identified medical needs, immunizations, medication logs, asthma plans, etc.

UCAN will provide foster caregivers with a designated recordkeeping resource, such as a folder, notebook, or caregiver recordkeeping packet, to support the organized storage and transportation of appropriate child-specific information.

The resource will include guidance regarding the maintenance of relevant medical, educational, appointment, medication, and placement information, as applicable to the child's needs. Caregivers will receive instructions regarding confidentiality, secure storage, and appropriate sharing or transfer of records when a child moves to another placement.

Licensing and case management staff will review recordkeeping expectations with foster caregivers during licensing, placement, and ongoing contacts as appropriate. Staff will also clarify which records caregivers are responsible for maintaining and which documents must be obtained from or retained by the agency.

UCAN will reinforce recordkeeping expectations during caregiver meetings and training, and address identified documentation gaps through technical assistance and follow-up.

The licensing department conducts licensing compliance visits during which they audit all child specific documentation/records. The licensing representative must certify that all records are complete and correct or describe any deficiencies and establish a plan to correct them. The importance of maintaining complete records is stated during each monthly foster caregiver meeting. Foster caregivers are held responsible for ensuring that all child specific records are maintained. The importance of maintaining records is also stated in Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes. Foster caregivers receive a copy of Rule 402 prior to signing the IDCFS foster care application and are informed that they can obtain updated copies of that policy through the licensing worker or online.

Ways UCAN does this well

- The updated Caregiver Handbook (see Appendix C) includes space to store medical, educational, and other important documents, and it is being distributed to all caregivers in November 2026, with an electronic version available first. Licensing workers also bring copies to monitoring visits.
- Licensing audits child-specific records at every compliance visit, and the importance of record keeping is repeated at monthly caregiver meetings.

Challenges/barriers

- Some caregivers are less comfortable with technology. UCAN offers paper binders and folders as an alternative to electronic files, and licensing staff provide one-on-one help with email, folders, and online training platforms.

31(16*)* THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SHARE INFORMATION THROUGH THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM REGARDING THE CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT IN THEIR HOME WITH THE SUBSEQUENT CAREGIVER, WHETHER THE CHILD'S PARENT OR ANOTHER SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER.

UCAN staff members encourage foster caregivers to provide feedback on the child's adjustment during home visits, licensing assessments and regular case staffings. Foster caregivers are also involved in the matching and pre-placement procedure into another home if appropriate.

The foster caregiver is encouraged to share information about the child's specific needs/behaviors with the subsequent foster caregiver or with the child's parent before the placement or

reunification occurs. UCAN informs foster caregivers during PRIDE training that they have the right to receive additional information about the foster child's history as it becomes available.

Ways UCAN does this well

- Caregivers share how the child is adjusting during home visits and staffings and take part in matching and pre-placement planning for the next home.
- As caregivers recommend, transition meetings between the current and new caregivers are held when appropriate.

Challenges/barriers

- Unplanned moves leave less time to share information. When this happens, UCAN keeps service providers informed and works to maintain continuity of care.

32(17) THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE CARE AND SERVICES WHICH ARE RESPECTFUL OF AND RESPONSIVE TO THE CHILD'S CULTURAL NEEDS AND ARE SUPPORTIVE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHILD AND HIS/HER OWN FAMILY. RECOGNIZE THE INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A CHILD'S CULTURAL IDENTITY WHEN RACE OR CULTURE OF THE FOSTER FAMILY DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE FOSTER CHILD AND TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES.

The issue of providing care to children sensitive to their cultural needs begins in pre-service training. The PRIDE curriculum includes competencies that speak to the importance of being respectful of the child and family's culture. Foster caregivers learn the distinctions between culture, ethnicity and race and the role each of these concepts plays in the life of a child.

During the matching and pre-placement process, natural family, cultural, and language issues are discussed with foster caregivers. At that time, it is determined if the foster caregivers feel comfortable with the child and capable of meeting their needs and embracing the child's racial, religious, cultural identity and sexual orientation. UCAN provides many training opportunities addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

UCAN offers mandatory in-service foster caregiver training on Cultural Diversity and Inclusion, which is available to foster caregivers to increase their knowledge and comfort level. Cultural Diversity and Inclusion issues are also discussed during PRIDE training and during the initial licensing process. The caregiver's capacity and willingness to competently care for children from diverse backgrounds is fully explored during the home study.

UCAN's training curriculum includes courses in Self-Awareness, Cultural Issues, and Understanding the Family. Specific training is provided regarding hair and skin care for caregivers who are cross-culturally serving children. Outside resources are available, such as training on Interracial Adoptions. Foster parents also sign an agreement to respect the religious beliefs of the child in the home.

UCAN encourages mentor relationships between new foster caregivers and foster caregivers of the child's ethnic/cultural heritage or who have fostered children of the child's ethnic/cultural heritage. These mentoring relationships enable foster caregivers to gain insight into cultures and traditions

different than their own and how this impacts a child's adjustment and comfort in their home.

There is also a new Bill, House Bill 5097, that ensures that all youth in care will have a Hair Care plan. It amends the Children and Family Services Act and provides that every case plan shall include a Haircare Plan for each youth in care that is developed in consultation with the youth based upon the youth's developmental abilities, as well as with the youth's parents or caregivers or appropriate child care facility staff if not contrary to the youth's wishes, and that outlines any training or resources required by the caregiver or appropriate child care facility staff to meet the haircare needs of the youth. A youth's Haircare Plan at a minimum must address (1) necessary haircare steps to be taken to preserve the youth's desired connection to the youth's race, culture, gender, religion, and identity; (2) necessary steps to be taken specific to the youth's haircare needs during emergency and health situations; and (3) the desires of the youth as they pertain to the youth's haircare.

Both Caseworkers and Licensing staff are aware of the Bill and have provided space during their scheduled visits to assess the cultural needs of youth in the home particularly around haircare and attire. If concerns arise, they are documented and discussed during Child and Family Team meetings. Furthermore, UCAN has demonstrated its support for this bill by partnering with Glow Up Studio. This new space offers on-site services and a space for youth in our residential facility to hang out and enjoy the process of grooming. The leaders of this group state that this endeavor represents an extension of its culturally affirming care for youth. This opportunity is housed at our Residential site but open to all UCAN youth in care.

Click Here to see the "Glow Up Salon/Barber Shop".

Ways UCAN does this well

- Cultural Diversity and Inclusion training is mandatory, and UCAN offers training on hair and skin care for caregivers serving children cross-culturally.
- Caseworkers and licensing staff assess each youth's haircare and cultural needs during visits, consistent with House Bill 5097, and UCAN's "Glow Up" salon and barber shop is open to all UCAN youth.
- New caregivers are paired with mentors who share, or have experience with, the child's cultural heritage.

Challenges/barriers

- Hair care plans are a new requirement for all youth in care, so staff and caregivers are still building skills in this area. UCAN provides training and resources, and concerns are discussed at Child and Family Team meetings.

Appendix A

Foster Caregiver Mutual Assessment Training Tool

UCAN

Foster Caregiver Mutual Assessment
& Training Plan

A collaborative tool for identifying strengths, training needs, and supports

Purpose and Instructions

Purpose: To support a structured, two-way discussion between the foster caregiver and UCAN staff about caregiver strengths, required and child-specific training, learning preferences, and supports that may help the caregiver provide safe, responsive, stable care.

How to use: Complete collaboratively with the caregiver. The caregiver and staff member should each share observations and priorities. Record the caregiver's perspective, staff observations, agreed actions, and follow-up dates. This is a planning and support tool—not a substitute for licensing requirements, required training records, child-specific planning, or applicable DCFS policy.

Recommended use: During licensing/pre-service planning, at least annually, when a placement presents new or changing needs, and when additional training or support may help address a concern or strengthen placement stability.

Section 1. Caregiver and Review Information

Field	Information
Caregiver name(s)	
UCAN staff completing review / role	
Date completed	
Review type	☐ Initial ☐ Annual ☐ Child-specific ☐ Placement support ☐ Other: _____
Program / level of care	☐ Traditional ☐ Home of Relative ☐ Specialized ☐ Adolescent ☐ Other: _____
Child-specific needs discussed (as appropriate)	
Next review date	

Section 2. Mutual Assessment Rating Guide

Rating	Meaning	Action guidance
1 — Training/support needed	Caregiver requests help, is unsure, or staff identifies a learning/support need.	Agree on training or support and a target date.
2 — Developing	Some knowledge or confidence; additional practice, information, or coaching would help.	Identify a learning activity and follow-up.
3 — Confident / demonstrated	Caregiver reports confidence and/or can describe or demonstrate the skill as appropriate.	Maintain access to resources; reassess if needs change.
N/A — Not applicable / not assessed	Topic is not currently relevant or was not assessed during this review.	Explain if follow-up assessment is needed.

Use ratings as conversation prompts, not as a pass/fail score. Document differences in caregiver and staff perspectives and agree on next steps.

Section 3. Training and Support Needs Assessment

For each area, record the caregiver's rating, staff perspective, specific needs or examples, and agreed next steps.

Assessment area	Rating	Need / action
1. Foster caregiver rights and responsibilities Rights, responsibilities, grievance/appeal pathways, and role on the child welfare team.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
2. Child welfare team communication Sharing relevant information, raising concerns, and communicating with case managers and providers.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____

3. Confidentiality and records Protecting private information; maintaining relevant child-specific records and documentation.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
4. Child-specific history and needs Understanding available medical, behavioral, developmental, educational, and placement information.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
5. Trauma-informed caregiving Understanding trauma responses and responding in a supportive, developmentally appropriate way.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
6. Behavior support and de-escalation Responding to challenging behavior, safety concerns, and crisis situations.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
7. Medical and medication needs Medication logs, appointments, health conditions, and child-specific medical instruction.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
8. Educational advocacy School communication, IEP/educational meetings, and accessing educational supports.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
9. Court, ACR, and service planning Understanding meetings, preparation, caregiver input, and relevant processes.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
10. Family connections and reunification Supporting safe family relationships, visitation, and the child's permanency plan.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
11. Cultural identity and individualized care Respecting race, culture, language, religion, identity, and individual preferences.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
12. Hair care and culturally responsive resources Identifying the child's hair-care needs and obtaining appropriate training/products/resources.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
13. LGBTQIA+ affirming care Supporting identity, dignity, safety, and belonging.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
14. Placement stability and prevention Recognizing early concerns and collaborating on stabilization strategies.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
15. Respite, backup care, and caregiver wellness Understanding respite options, backup caregiver planning, stress, and compassion fatigue.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
16. Substance use awareness and safety Recognizing risks, responding appropriately, and accessing relevant supports.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
17. Developmental disabilities / specialized needs Understanding needs such as autism or developmental delays when applicable.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
18. Mandated reporting and safety concerns Knowing when and how to report suspected abuse/neglect and raise urgent safety concerns.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
19. Independent living / adolescent needs Supporting life skills, shared living expectations, and age-appropriate independence.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____
20. Other caregiver-identified topic Record the caregiver's requested topic or support need.	Caregiver: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A Staff: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐N/A	Need / agreed action: _____

Section 4. Required and Outstanding Training Review

Verify against UCAN's current training matrix and the caregiver's program/level of care. Do not use this section as a substitute for the official training record.

Training / requirement	Required for this caregiver?	Status	Due date / notes
Pre-service / PRIDE or applicable relative caregiver training	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____
CPR / First Aid, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____
Educational Advocacy, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____
LGBTQIA+ training, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____
Medication / child-specific medical training, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____
Trauma / behavior support training, as applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____
Other required training per current UCAN/DCFS requirements	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Verify	☐ Complete ☐ In progress ☐ Outstanding ☐ N/A	_____

Section 5. Caregiver Strengths, Preferences, and Support Needs

Prompt	Collaborative notes
What is going well in caregiving right now?	
What skills or experiences does the caregiver feel most confident about?	
What situations feel challenging or would benefit from additional preparation?	
What training formats work best? (e.g., in-person, virtual, coaching, peer discussion, written resources)	
What supports may be helpful? (e.g., respite, mentoring, case consultation, clinical or community resources)	
What training topics does the caregiver want UCAN to offer to the broader caregiver community?	

Section 6. Individual Training and Support Action Plan

Priority / need	Action or training	Responsible person	Target date	Completion / follow-up
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Follow-up plan: ☐ Email/phone check-in ☐ Home visit ☐ Training completion review ☐ Supervisor consultation ☐ Other: _____
Follow-up date: _____ Staff responsible: _____

Section 7. Caregiver and Staff Co-Training / Peer Learning

Identify opportunities for experienced foster caregivers and UCAN staff to jointly support learning, subject to caregiver interest, confidentiality, and program approval.

Opportunity	Interest / plan	Next step / owner
☐ Caregiver co-facilitator for PRIDE or orientation	_____	_____
☐ Share practical experience at caregiver meeting	_____	_____
☐ Peer mentor / support connection	_____	_____
☐ Suggest or review future training topics	_____	_____
☐ Other	_____	_____

Section 8. Program-Level Trends and Improvement

Staff should summarize recurring needs without including unnecessary identifying or confidential child information. Aggregate themes may inform the annual training calendar and program improvement.

Question	Notes
Are multiple caregivers identifying a similar training need?	
Does this assessment suggest a need for a new training, resource, or policy clarification?	
Should the issue be referred to the Foster Parent Advisory Council or program leadership?	
What should be tracked for follow-up or quality improvement?	

Section 9. Review, Agreement, and Follow-Up

The signatures below confirm that the assessment and action plan were discussed collaboratively. They do

not indicate that every training need has been resolved or replace any required licensing or training documentation.

Participant	Signature	Date
Foster caregiver		
Additional caregiver (if applicable)		
UCAN staff member / role		
Supervisor review (if needed)		

Caregiver comments or disagreement with assessment / priorities:

_____

_____

Supervisor follow-up or approval notes (if applicable):

_____

_____

Staff Completion Checklist

☐ Caregiver perspective and preferences were documented.

☐ Staff observations and any differing perspectives were discussed respectfully.

☐ Required training was verified against the current official record.

☐ Child-specific needs were considered where appropriate.

☐ Agreed actions have an owner and target date.

☐ Follow-up date or method was identified.

☐ Training trends were considered for program-level planning.

☐ Assessment was stored according to UCAN recordkeeping and confidentiality proce

Appendix B

Acronyms Used in This Plan

Acronym	Meaning
A&I Licensing	DCFS Agency and Institution Licensing
ACH	Automated Clearing House (direct deposit payment)
ACR	Administrative Case Review
AFC	Adolescent Foster Care
BHS	Behavioral Health Services
CARES	Crisis and Referral Entry Services (DCFS crisis line)
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CEO / CFO / COO	Chief Executive Officer / Chief Financial Officer / Chief Operating Officer
CFS	Form number prefix for DCFS (Children and Family Services) forms, such as CFS 151-B
CIPP	Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (now called a DCFS Clinical Staffing)
COA	Council on Accreditation
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
DCFS / IDCFS	Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
DCP	DCFS Division of Child Protection
FARE	DCFS interview process that gathers a youth's view of past placements
FY	Fiscal Year (UCAN's FY27 runs July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027)
GAL	Guardian ad Litem (the child's court-appointed attorney)
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (health privacy law)
HMR	Home of Relative (relative caregiver)
IEP	Individualized Education Program
ILCS	Illinois Compiled Statutes
IPS	Intensive Placement Stabilization
KIND Act	Illinois Kinship in Demand Act
LDC	DCFS Learning and Development Center (online training)
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and more
MCR	Mobile Crisis Response
OIG	DCFS Office of the Inspector General
PFP	UCAN Professional Foster Parenting program
PRIDE	Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (DCFS pre-service training)
RAMP	The payment platform UCAN uses for foster caregiver direct deposits
SASS	Screening, Assessment and Support Services
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
WIC	Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Appendix C

UCAN Professional Foster Parenting Guide & Resource Manual: Table of Contents

Every UCAN foster caregiver receives this updated handbook, which is being distributed in November 2026, with an electronic version available first. It includes space to store important medical, educational, and other records (see Responsibility 30(15)).

I. Orientation & Foundations

1. Welcome to UCAN
2. Foster Parent Letter
3. Emergency Contacts
4. Vision, Mission, and Our Core Values
5. Foster Parent Implementation Plan
6. Foster Parent Handbook
7. Foster Parents Rights & Responsibilities

II. Licensing & Training

1. 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes
2. FAQs
3. DCFS Learning Center: Instructions on Account Setup & Navigation
4. Board Payment & Different Levels of Care
5. Semi-Annual Home Monitoring Form
6. Quarterly Fire & Tornado Drill Requirement
7. DCFS Procedures 415: KIND Act
8. Grievance Policy
9. Permanency Options: Adoption/Guardianship

III. Resources & Tools

1. Workforce Development Services
2. Educational Mentoring Program
3. Financial Literacy Program
4. Foster Parent Support Specialist
5. SASS – Screening, Assessment, and Support Services for Children and Adolescents

DCFS Forms Used by Foster Parents/Foster Children

6. Medication Administration Log
7. Illinois Department of Public Health Proof of School Dental Examination Form
8. State of Illinois Certificate of Child Health Examination
9. State of Illinois Eye Examination Report
10. Asthma Action Plan (CFA 690)
11. UCAN Mileage Reimbursement Form