§ 131D-10.9C. Foster parents' Bill of Rights.

(a) The State recognizes the importance of foster parents in the vital role of supporting children and families experiencing foster care. When children are removed from their parents or legal guardians, families are almost immediately integrated into a team, including child welfare workers, resource parents, a guardian ad litem, attorneys, and others who are working together to address the issues leading to the foster care.

(b) In an effort to ensure that foster parents are treated with dignity, respect, and trust in their work for the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, with this team, the State supports and promotes the following for foster parents in the provision of foster care:

(1) To serve as a respected member of the child welfare team. Foster parents will also honor children placed in their homes in accordance with G.S. 131D-10.1.

(2) To receive information about the responsibilities of foster parents and access to support services, including all of the following:

a. Required training and resources to ensure preparedness for caring for children experiencing loss and trauma.

b. Access to the Division of Social Services and licensing agency policies, including traveling with children in- and out-of-state, family visits and time, supervised and unsupervised, complaint and grievance policies, and confidentiality.

c. Any known information to help better care for children, including health and behavioral health history, disability, exposure to trauma, and educational needs.

d. Additional or necessary information that the county department of social services has that may be relevant to the care of the child when the child is placed with the foster parents.

e. Advance notice of scheduled meetings and appointments regarding case planning and care of the child.

f. Reasonable notice, subject to the circumstances of each particular case, to a foster parent with regard to the removal of a child from the foster home.

g. Participation in transition planning when it is in the best interest of the child.

h. 24/7 emergency contact information in the event of crisis or emergency.

i. Referral to resources for dealing with loss and separation when children return home to their parents.

(3) Be notified of any costs or expenses that may be eligible for reimbursement.

(4) Have timely allocation of resources, including submission of child care vouchers and a monthly stipend that meets or exceeds the rate established by the Division of Social Services.

(5) Receive notice of hearings regarding the child placed in the foster home and to be heard in court, either verbally or in writing, as provided for in G.S. 7B-906.1.

(6) Receive timely information pertinent to the day-to-day care of the child, including educational and health needs.

(7) Have input in court and be included as a valued member of the child's team, including the right to be informed by the clerk of court of periodic reviews of the juvenile case of a child in foster care at least 15 days before each review, and the right to provide input, verbal or written, during periodic reviews of any

information that may be relevant to a child's best interests so that the court may use that information in forming its opinion on the case.

(8) Provide input to, advocate for, and seek out support from the supervising agency without fear of reprisal, including the right to request respite as needed or to request a break between placements.

(9) Be allowed reasonable opportunities to be consulted with and considered in the scheduling of home visits, therapies, and other meetings related to the child that the foster or resource parents are allowed or required to attend.

(10) Request a change in licensing workers.

(11) Be considered as prospective adoptive placement after a termination of parental rights hearing or relinquishment pursuant to G.S. 7B-1112.1.

(12) Utilize the reasonable and prudent parent standard in determining whether a foster parent can allow a child in the foster parent's care to participate in educational field trips and extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities. This standard is characterized by careful and thoughtful parental decision-making that is intended to maintain a child's health, safety, and best interest while encouraging the child's social, emotional, and developmental growth.

(13) Request a shared parenting agreement that includes clear expectations and appropriate boundaries for all parties.

(14) Request contact information be kept confidential by the supervising agency when safety concerns are present.

(c) A violation of this Bill of Rights shall not be construed to create a cause of action under this section against the State, the Department of Health and Human Services, private supervising agencies, local county departments of social services, or an entity providing foster care pursuant to this Article. Nothing in this Bill of Rights shall override existing law or administrative rule. (2021-144, s. 1.)