

## **Partnership Plan between Caregivers for Children and Teens in Out-of-Home Care and the Department of Children and Family Services and Staff**

The purpose of this partnership plan is to confirm our mutual commitment to children and teens through a common understanding of the values, principles and practices we will uphold in fulfilling our responsibilities to children and teens in the care and custody of the State of Louisiana.

### **We agree that:**

***Every child deserves quality parenting every day, regardless of where the child is living or who is providing their care***

### **Caregivers provide high-quality parenting**

Providing quality parenting is the expectation for all caregivers. This involves a commitment to the physical and psychological safety and well-being of the child or teen. Quality parenting for children in DCFS custody includes:

- Having an awareness of the physical and emotional impact of trauma on a child or teen.
- Having respect for the child or teen's individuality, and fully integrating him or her into your family.
- Providing appropriate supervision and discipline in accordance with DCFS policy.
- Recognizing and encouraging the talents, gifts, and strengths of each child or teen.
- Providing opportunities to develop interests and skills through normal, developmentally appropriate activities.
- Sharing responsibility for preparing teens for transition to adulthood through hands-on activities and opportunities to learn and practice skills.
- Participating fully in medical, dental, and psychological care, including providing transportation and consulting with providers to ensure that the needs of the child and teen are met.
- Actively supporting educational success by participating in school activities, meetings, etc., and encouraging the child or teen's participation in extracurricular activities.
- Developing a "co-parenting" partnership to the extent possible with the birth family.

### **DCFS and staff support caregivers in providing high-quality parenting**

Support to caregivers includes:

- Providing contact information for the worker and supervisor so support and resources are available, as needed, 24/7.
- Responding to phone calls, emails, requests for services and other resources in a timely manner to help caregivers meet the needs of the child or teen.
- Communicating regularly with caregivers to discuss their strengths and challenges in meeting the specific and unique needs of each child or teen placed in their home.
- Offering training and educational opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.

### **DCFS, staff, and caregivers support the well-being of the child or teen**

Supporting a child's well-being includes:

- Advocating for children and teens within the child welfare system, the court system, schools, mental health, health care and other aspects of the community.
- Demonstrating respect for a child or teen's identity, including religion, culture, race, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, language, sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, physical ability and other characteristics.
- Removing a child or teen only when: 1) the caregiver is clearly unable to meet the needs of that child or teen; 2) when the birth family and the child or teen are reunited; 3) when the child or teen is being placed in a legally permanent home in accordance with the case plan or court order; 4) or when the removal is demonstrably in the child or teen's best interest.
- Ensuring the transition plan is followed and agreed upon by all parties if a child or teen must leave the caregiver's home for one of the above reasons, and in the absence of an unforeseeable emergency. It should take into consideration the child or teen's developmental stage and psychological needs and account for all of the child or teen's belongings. It should allow for a gradual transition from the caregiver's home and, if possible, facilitate continued contact.

### **DCFS staff and caregivers support connections between the child or teen and his or her birth (or previous) family**

Supporting connections includes:

- Respecting and supporting the child or teen's ties to their birth family and other important relationships. Caregivers, with the guidance of DCFS staff, support the child or teen in maintaining these relationships by assisting with appropriate visitation, phone calls, emails, text messages, Facetime, Skype etc.
- Supporting and preparing the caregiver and birth parent to build a co-parenting relationship. This includes engaging the birth parent in school activities or meetings, medical or mental health appointments, etc.
- Working together with the birth parent to prepare the child or teen for transition and to provide continuity for his or her birth parents. This is important when the permanency plan includes reunification.

### **Caregivers and DCFS staff share information and respect confidentiality**

Sharing information includes:

- Providing caregivers all relevant information available about the child and their family situation prior to placement, as well as regular updates to assist the caregiver in parenting the child.
- Sharing information with each other and the birth parent about the child's progress and needs, health or mental health services, visitation, recreational and social activities, academic performance, behavioral functioning and issues regarding school placement. All partners treat information confidentially.

- Working in partnership with DCFS staff to maintain school records, medical and mental health records, photographs of the child or teen and records of special events and achievements.

**Caregivers and DCFS staff members respect each other as true partners**

Respect is shown by:

- Working together in a manner that nurtures and supports an open, honest, positive, working relationship.
- Collaborating on a plan for the child or teen in care. Caregivers are invited to attend and are encouraged to participate in all Family Team Meetings and court review hearings.
- Respecting the need for DCFS staff to visit privately each month with the child or teen to ensure safety and well-being.
- Understanding that children sometimes have a perspective that does not accurately or fully represent a situation; therefore, staff always provide the opportunity to hear the caregiver’s perspective.
- Treating each other in a professional manner, acknowledging the challenges we each face in fulfilling our role/ and starting with the assumption that each is doing the best they can for the children and families being served.

***By their respective signatures below, both the DCFS Staff and Caregiver(s) understand and are committed to practicing the outlined partnership expectations that ensure quality care for the children or teens in the home.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Caregiver Name (PRINT)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Caregiver Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Caregiver Name (PRINT)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Caregiver Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DCFS Name (PRINT)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DCFS Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**