

**Upbring Foster In Texas**  
Lutheran Social Services of the South  
Additional Placement Orientation Policies for a Child in Care

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Child's Name

**As a child in care, you have the right to receive information relevant to your placement into a foster home. This document includes policies that are important to you as you experience your foster home placement. Please ask for clarification if you need help in understanding these policies as they are explained to you or at anytime you have a question.**

**Visitation** – A child placed into care is allowed contact with his/her parents, when parental rights have not been terminated, and with siblings, as appropriate, since one of the primary goals for children in care is family reunification. Our staff and foster parents facilitate visits and contacts between you and your parent(s) and siblings, unless contact is restricted or not allow by the court of jurisdiction, your service planning team or your therapist or a sibling's therapist.

Visits may be held at the LSS office, in the foster home, in your family's home, at the CPS office or any other location agreed upon by your parents and your DFPS caseworker. If barriers to visits with siblings exist, such as unavoidable geographic distance and expense issues, our staff and foster parents make provisions for sibling contact through letters, telephone calls or some other means.

**Telephone** – Your foster family establishes a phone usage plan or schedule that is appropriate for you and other members of the family and the plan is shared with your Family Services staff.

**Mail** – Children in care are allowed to receive mail, including email, from their parent(s) and siblings, unless a court order mandates otherwise. You may have privacy when you write or receive correspondence unless there is a reason to believe that you are considering and writing or receiving mail about running away, an illegal activity, or being encouraged to disregard your treatment objectives. A Child Placement Management Staff (CPMS) may decide to restrict your contacts with such persons based on "your best interests" and will explain the reason to you and to your family or friend involved. If the restriction continues for more than 30 days, the CPMS must re-evaluate the restriction.

Any restrictions on visits or contacts, other than those ordered by the court, are made by the CPMS after consulting with a Treatment Director and your service planning team. The reasons are explained to you and documented in your record. The restriction is re-evaluated on a monthly basis.

**Gifts** – A child in care is allowed to receive gifts from friends and family. The gift becomes your property. You may be asked to open the gift in front of your foster or pre-consummation adoptive parents if there is reason to believe that the gift contains contraband (e.g. drugs, weapons, alcohol, cigarettes, pornography, etc.); otherwise you may have privacy when you open a gift.

**Personal Possessions** - A child in care is allowed to have personal belongings and must have a place to store the possessions as long as the personal possessions are safe and do not threaten the safety and well-being of the child or others in the foster home. Items that are not allowable are items such as those listed in the paragraph above and any other item identified as inappropriate by your foster parents and Family Services staff.

**Religious or Spiritual Care** – As a faith-based agency, LSS respects and encourages each child to practice their religious or spiritual beliefs. At intake, each child is assessed regarding his/her religion or spiritual practices. This information is shared with the foster parents. The foster parents understand the child's right to participate in religious ceremonies, etc. and provide opportunities upon request. Transportation and scheduling, consultation with biological parents and/or managing conservator, and ongoing assessment are integral to this process. Foster parents may encourage a child to participate with them in their religious practices and appreciate the efforts made by the child to participate as an important member of the foster family.

**Discipline** – Only a foster parent or other designated caregiver who knows and is knowledgeable of a child in care may discipline the child. Each disciplinary measure must be consistent with LSS policies and procedures, not be physically or emotionally damaging to you, be individualized to meet your needs, be appropriate to your level of understanding and developmental level, and be appropriate to the incident and severity of the behavior demonstrated.

The goal of each disciplinary measure must be to teach you acceptable behavior and self-control. Your foster parents or other caregiver should explain the reason for the discipline measure when they impose the measure. Consistency of positive methods of discipline and guidance among caregivers is important to encouraging your self-esteem, self-control and self-direction, all leading to increased self-respect.

At no time is corporal punishment, unproductive work, harsh, cruel, unusual, unnecessary or humiliating discipline or punishment allowed. You may not be denied mail or visits with your family as a discipline measure. Threatening you with the loss of your placement is not allowed. You should not be treated with sarcastic or cruel humor or verbal abuse. You must never be made to maintain an uncomfortable physical position, be subjected to pinching, hair pulling, biting or shaking, or putting anything in or on your mouth, such as soap or tape. Humiliating, shaming, ridiculing, rejecting or yelling at you is not allowable. You may not be placed in a dark room, bathroom or closet and may not be subjected to abusive or profane language.

Requiring you to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for your age, confining you to a highchair, box or other similar furniture or equipment as discipline or punishment is not allowed. Denying your basic child rights as a form of discipline or punishment or withholding food that meets your nutritional requirements is not allowed. Using or threatening to use personal restraint as discipline or punishment is not allowed.

Restriction of your activities as a behavior management tool is allowed, within limits. Restrictions of activities, other than school or chores, which may be imposed on you for more

than 30 days must be reviewed with and approved by the CPMS or treatment director prior to or within 24 hours of imposing the restriction.

Restrictions to a particular room that may be imposed on you for more than 24 hours must have approval from your service planning team, a professional service provider or treatment director prior to or within 24 hours of imposing the restriction.

You and your parent/conservator must be informed of any such restrictions placed on you. Approval, justification and informing you and your parent/conservator of such discipline measures must be documented in your record.

**Educational Expectations** – A child in care must have an appropriate education through participation in an educational and/or vocational program in the most appropriate and least restrictive educational setting, for example, attending regular classes conducted in a school within the community. Your foster parents and Family Services staff attend and participate in school staffings, conferences and education planning meetings in order to assist you in obtaining the best possible educational outcomes.

You are expected to attend school regularly, stay on the campus as required by school rules, follow school rules and bring assignments for home work or unfinished class work home at the end of the school day. Your foster parents will help you with your homework or request tutoring services from your school or the community if you need additional help.

Your foster parents will make reasonable efforts to allow you to participate in extracurricular activities to the extent of your interests and abilities and in accordance with your service plan.

Your foster parents maintain an Education Portfolio for you so you will have all relevant educational information available to you in the future.

**Trips Away From the Foster Home** – A child in care may go on trips away from the foster home with the foster family or with others as approved by the child's foster parents and Family Services staff. A trip away from the foster home of 48 hours or more to the home of a non-relative must be approved in writing by your Family Services staff and parent/DFPS caseworker. Any trip away from the foster home for 72 hours or more, not to include respite care, must be approved in writing by your Family Services staff and parent/DFPS caseworker.

**Program Expectations and Rules** – Each foster family has family and home expectations that have been shared with their Family Services staff. These expectations will be explained to you and you are expected to live within those expectations. Should you feel the expectations are unfair, speak to your foster parents about the situation and if you feel you have not been heard you may speak to your Family Services staff who will help in further discussion with your foster parents.

**Information for a Pregnant Child Regarding Her Pregnancy** – If you are a pregnant teenager your foster parents will ensure that you receive information, training and counseling regarding health aspects of pregnancy, preparation for child birth and recovery from child birth; ensure that

you receive nutritional counseling and guidance that meets generally accepted standards, including nutrition during pregnancy, lactation and foods to avoid, and to ensure that you understand that you have the right to be free of pressure to get an abortion, relinquish your child for adoption or parent your child.

**Body Of Water Orientation** – A child in care may participate in water activities but foster parents must use prudent judgment and ensure that children that are in care are protected from unsupervised access to water such as a swimming pool, hot tub, fountain, pond, lake, creek, or other body of water. If children are allowed to swim in any body of water such as those listed above the supervising adult must clearly designate swimming areas. The supervising adult must also explain to participants the activities and the dangers of the body of water in a way that is clearly understood to the child in care prior to participation.

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Child in Care

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Date

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Foster Parent

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Date

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Family Services Worker

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Date