



# Resource Family Handbook

*Open your heart  
and your home*





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# Resource Family Handbook Index

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# Introduction

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## What is Child Protection & Permanency?

Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) is New Jersey's child protection and child welfare agency. Residing within the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, CP&P investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect, makes arrangements to ensure that children are safe and protected, and helps families receive needed treatment and services.

CP&P provides foster and adoption services and is called upon to intervene and provide social services to address family and juvenile problems. CP&P provides services to families through its 46 local offices throughout New Jersey.

CP&P's Institutional Abuse Investigative Unit (IAIU) responds to allegations of abuse and neglect in resource homes and institutions. CP&P's 24-hour State Central Registry hotline – 1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873) – accepts reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.

## What is Resource Family Care?

There are three types of Resource Family Care providers: foster, adoption, and kinship. Foster caregivers are individuals and families who voluntarily open their hearts and homes to become temporary parents to children in need of a home due to protective or other social service reasons.

Adoptive caregivers provide permanent care for children whose parents have had their parental rights terminated.

Kinship caregivers are related to a child in placement through blood, marriage, civil union, domestic partnership, or adoption. Kinship caregivers may also be connected to the child by an established positive psychological or emotional relationship.

While children are in placement, the resource family offers them loving experiences that promote healthy growth and development. They provide the vital physical and emotional care that children need when they are separated from their biological parents. Foster and adoptive caregivers must first be licensed to provide care. Kinship caregivers may provide care before being licensed if they're eligible for licensure and are in the process of being licensed.

## Who Comprises the CP&P Resource Family Team?

As a resource parent, you will interact with many staff members and aspects of CP&P. The CP&P Resource Family Team includes:

### Resource Family Support Unit (RFSU):

**Resource Family Support Supervisor:** Oversees the work of the Resource Family Support Unit. The supervisor provides assistance, support and direction to members of the RFSU to ensure that potential and licensed resource families comply with Department requirements. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that families are properly supported and that their concerns are addressed. If you need to discuss any matters related to the home study process or the child in placement, ask for the Resource Family Support Supervisor.

**Resource Family Support Worker (RFSW):** Your RFSW will work with you to conduct your home study. This includes visiting your home several times and meeting and interviewing all household members. Resource Parents may contact their RFSW with questions about agency policies or concerns. The RFSW should be notified immediately whenever the following occurs:

- Change in household composition
- Change in address and/or telephone number
- Change in employment status or hours of employment
- Any event that may impact on your ability to care for a child in care (e.g., fire, flood, construction, burglary damage, etc.)
- Arrest, death, disability or serious illness of a household member

**Resource Family Recruiter (RFR):** Each county has a RFR to recruit new resource family homes. This recruiter will be your first point of contact toward becoming a resource parent.

**Resource Family Trainer (RFT):** The RFT provides the required pre-service training to all resource family applicants and ensures pre-service training schedules are flexible to accommodate family schedules.

**Resource Family Facilitator:** Your Resource Family Facilitator will contact you when there are children in need of placement. The facilitator will provide information about the children being placed and answer questions about the placement process.

**Office of Licensing (OOL):** The Office of Licensing is responsible for inspecting and licensing your home and ensuring that regulatory requirements for the safety, protection, comfort, and well-being of children are met.

**Resource Family Inspector:** The Resource Family Inspector, an OOL representative, will visit and assess your home for compliance with the Manual of Requirements for Resource Family Parents (Chapter 122C).

## **Local Office:**

**Caseworker (Family Service Specialist):** Your first contact with a caseworker will likely be when a child is placed in your home. This caseworker will regularly visit your home to provide valuable support. You, the caseworker, and the child's family are part of the team working toward reuniting the child with the child's biological family.

**Supervisor:** The caseworker's immediate supervisor is knowledgeable about the child placed in your care. If you need to discuss an urgent matter and your caseworker is unavailable, ask for your caseworker's supervisor.

**Casework Supervisor:** The casework supervisor provides guidance and supervision to caseworkers and supervisors. If you have an urgent matter and both your caseworker and your caseworker's supervisor is unavailable, ask for the casework supervisor.

**Local Office Manager (LOM):** The LOM is responsible for the operation of the local office. The manager is involved with special case situations and has authority to approve special requests.

**Birth/Legal Parents:** Regardless of the circumstances that caused a child to be placed in resource family care, children remain strongly attached to their biological families. If it is in the child's best interests and does not jeopardize their safety, our goal for most children in out-of-home care is to reunify them with their biological parents.

## Children In Care

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### How and when does visitation occur between children and their families?

Since parent/child visits are critical in working toward a child's return home, frequent and consistent visits are encouraged and court ordered for most families. The caseworker establishes a plan for visits after consulting with you, the child's parents, and the child, when appropriate. Although you cannot refuse to allow a child in your care to participate in visits, you should have a role in planning the visit. This will permit you to make appropriate scheduling arrangements for child care, work, school, and family activities. Sometimes the family court judge will be specific about visits, which may decrease scheduling flexibility.

If you have a problem with a parent/child visit, please contact your caseworker. In an emergency, contact your CP&P Local Office. When the office is closed call the 24 hour SCR Hotline at 1-877-NJ ABUSE.

### Do visits occur with siblings and extended family members?

Just as a child's separation from the biological parents is traumatic, separation from brothers and sisters and other significant relatives and friends can also cause pain for children in care. Every effort should be made to place siblings together. When this is not possible, it is crucial for a child's well-being that they maintain regular contact with their siblings. Contact with extended family members and family friends should also be maintained through visits, phone calls, letters, and e-mails whenever possible and appropriate.

For some children in resource family care, the goal is to place them with a relative instead of returning them to their biological parents. In other situations, the relative will not assume full-time care responsibilities, but may have a significant role in the children's lives. For instance, a relative may be able to provide transportation to therapy or medical appointments and attend the children's school plays, conferences, birthday parties or other social activities.

Any activity that positively integrates the birth family, including siblings and relatives, into the child's daily life strengthens the placement and contributes to the child's well-being and future success of the child's return to the birth family.

### How does confidentiality apply to the children in my care?

CP&P is responsible for ensuring the confidentiality (or privacy) of all information concerning the children and families it serves. As a resource parent, you share this responsibility.

Your caseworker will share with you all necessary information about the children in your care to enable you to adequately care for the children. New Jersey law requires that you only discuss or share child abuse/neglect information about a child when doing so is necessary to provide the child with care, treatment, or supervision. Individuals with whom you may share pertinent information about children in your care may include doctors, teachers, and counselors. You must not share background or child abuse/neglect information about the child or the child's family with relatives, friends, neighbors, or the media. Children in care cannot be photographed for newspaper articles, Facebook, or any publication where their identities would become known to the public.

## **What consents am I authorized to give for a child in my care?**

Foster and kinship parents act as a child's parent but don't have the "rights" of a biological or adoptive parent.

For most children in resource family care, their birth parents remain their legal parents. This means you cannot consent for a child in placement to do things considered "major" events. Examples include, but aren't limited to:

- Surgery or other exceptional medical treatment
- Military enlistment
- Marriage
- Changing religious affiliation
- Employment
- Quitting school
- Changing a child's name or nickname
- Baptism
- Cutting a young child's hair if it is against the parents' wishes based on their culture and tradition
- Ears or body piercing
- Tattoos

The birth parent or a CP&P representative will usually give consent or permission when warranted. This is an area that highlights the importance of partnership and communication among the resource parent, caseworker and birth parent(s).

## **What is the Resource Parent Identification Letter?**

CP&P issues a Resource Parent Identification Letter when a child is placed in your home. This letter helps with registering the child in school, obtaining routine medical care, and receiving other necessary services for the child. The letter also serves as documentation that the foster child is eligible to receive free and reduced meals (in schools that participate in the free and reduced meals program) without the need for the resource parent to complete an application.

The letter provides the name, date of birth, CP&P case number, and Medicaid number for the child, as well as the resource parent's name, address, and telephone number. It is signed by the appropriate Local Office Manager or designee, notarized, and labeled "confidential". Neither the letter nor the contents of the letter should be shared, except on an as-needed basis with appropriate parties, as indicated above.

## **What can I expect regarding board and clothing payments?**

Resource Parents receive a monthly board reimbursement for each child placed in your home. Reimbursement covers the child's living expenses, such as food, shelter, personal allowance, general recreation activities, and cultural activities.

To determine the appropriate board rate, the resource parent, caseworker and CP&P nurse participate in a Resource Family Care Rate Assessment, which reviews the circumstances of every child placed with a family. The initial review takes place at the time, or within 30 days, of placement.

Based on guidelines, you and the caseworker determine an appropriate rate for the child. The caseworker then submits this rate for approval. At a minimum, you and the caseworker review the guidelines and assess the board rate every three months.

**Authorized Absences and Board Payments:** There may be times when a child is absent from your home for a period of time (e.g., vacationing with parents, hospitalization, attendance at camp, etc.).

When an absence has been approved by CP&P, you will receive your usual board payment for up to four weeks

**Clothing Allowance:** CP&P provides a monthly clothing allowance strictly for the child's clothing. The allowance for teenagers is slightly higher. When a child leaves your resource home, the clothing accompanies the child.

**Initial Clothing Allowance:** For children who've never previously been placed in a resource home, CP&P will provide the resource family an initial clothing allowance. This initial allowance is for purchasing the child a basic wardrobe. If an infant is placed in your home from the hospital, an additional allowance is usually provided to purchase a car seat if you don't have one.

## Payment Procedures

Foster and adoptive family monthly payment information phone number: 1-866-461-4094

**Automatic Payment System:** When a child is placed in a resource family home, the caseworker enters updated information about the placement into CP&P's computer system. If the update is completed by the last working day of the month, an automatic payment will be initiated. Approximately 10 working days after the first day of the next month, you can expect the previous month's board payment. Partial payment, a per diem rate, will be paid if the child spent less than one full month in your home.

**Manual Payment System:** If CP&P's computer system isn't updated before the end of the month the child stayed with you, or it's a vacation placement, the caseworker will complete a Claim for Payment System Invoice (Form K-100). This is a manual payment process. After the caseworker completes Form K-100, you will receive two copies. Return the signed original to CP&P and keep the other copy for your records. You can expect payment within one month after signing and returning the invoice.

**Payment Method:** You may choose to receive your subsidy and board payments by either direct deposit or debit card. You will receive an enrollment package that includes validation information to establish your access to [www.njdcfpaymentcenter.com](http://www.njdcfpaymentcenter.com) in order to view your payment information.

If you do not submit the direct deposit enrollment form, you will automatically be mailed a debit card. To ensure the confidentiality of your subsidy and board payment information, an individualized sign-in procedure has been established. The use of a resource identification number (Resource ID) and password allows you to access your payment information.

Signing into the website or calling customer service is easy and will allow you to browse through your payment information. If you have any questions regarding your debit card, call customer service at 1-866-461-4094 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or visit [www.njdcfpaymentcenter.com](http://www.njdcfpaymentcenter.com)

## Are there tax benefits to being a Resource Parent?

As resource and adoptive parents, you may qualify to claim deductions and credit on your federal income tax returns for your foster and adoptive children. The National Foster Parent Association has a 26 page resource guide entitled “Federal Tax Benefits - Foster, Adoptive Parents and Kinship Caregivers” that provides general information regarding basic tax rules and tips regarding eligibility. The guide is available at [www.NFPAonline.org](http://www.NFPAonline.org).

## What information and resources do I need to know about adolescents?

Adolescence is an exciting stage of life where a youth’s identity is developing and their sense of autonomy and independence is increasing. Additionally, recent research indicates that from adolescence through age 26, the brain is still developing important functions such as decision-making, working memory, regulation, and organization.

As a resource parent it is important to remember that adolescents in foster care have the same needs as all adolescents. It is important to help youth identify, develop, and strengthen their resilience, social connections, knowledge of adolescent development, awareness of community resources available, and cognitive and social-emotional competencies.

Resource parents are responsible for assisting an adolescent to develop critical life skills such as activities of daily living, education and career planning, money management, and managing/developing critical relationships. Check out the “Resource to Inspire Guide” at the Casey Family Programs website for more information: [http://lifeskills.casey.org/clsa\\_learn\\_provider](http://lifeskills.casey.org/clsa_learn_provider) (guide is on the left side of the page).

Adolescents in foster care have a wide variety of experiences and histories in their family, communities, and schools. Their understanding of family, relationships, trust, structure, expectations, and rules is also quite varied. As a resource parent it is important to remember where an adolescent is at developmentally combined with these histories and experiences in order to support them as they successfully transition to adulthood.

**“Thanks to my foster parents for pulling me out of the rain to see the sunny side.”**

- Tameka

### Important Adolescent Related Resources

For youth in foster care ages 14-21, CP&P has a variety of services and supports available. The CP&P case worker assigned to the adolescent that resides in your home will be responsible for helping to coordinate services and supports with you. In addition, DCF has developed an Office of Adolescent Services (OAS) and there are various resources available at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/>. You can also contact the staff at OAS by phone at 609-888-7100 or email at [dcf\\_adolescentservices@dcf.state.nj.us](mailto:dcf_adolescentservices@dcf.state.nj.us).

Here are some important resources and services that an adolescent in your home can get connected with or referred to:

1. Life Skills Programs, Permanency Programs, Aftercare Programs, Wraparound (aka Chafee) Funds-Please refer to this resource guide and check for the program in your county  
<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/OASresourceguide.pdf>
2. DCF Youth Advisory Boards (important for building leadership, advocacy, networking skills!)  
<https://www.facebook.com/njyabs>

3. Scholarships for NJ Youth in Foster Care  
<http://www.fafsonline.org/scholarship.html>
4. Education Resources  
<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/education/>
5. Employment Resources  
<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/employment/>
6. NJ Career Assistance Navigator (career and education planning)  
[www.njcan.org](http://www.njcan.org)
7. Healthcare: <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/healthcare/Resources>, for LGBTQI Youth:  
<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/lgbtqi/>
8. Resources for Expectant and Youth Parents  
<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/parenting/>

Adolescents in resources homes can attend various other activities in the community and school such as afterschool programs, sports, clubs, camps, band, art, dance, mentoring support, school dances, prom, graduation, award/recognition ceremonies, volunteering, and apprenticeships. These activities and connections are important! If there are uniforms, equipment, fees, or other logistics that need to be coordinated please speak with the CP&P worker assigned to the adolescent in your home.

### **Siblings In Best Settings (SIBS) Program**

Siblings in Best Settings (SIBS) is a program developed to support families willing and able to accommodate a large sibling group of four or more. Resource families eligible to participate in the program can be existing licensed families, kinship families, or new resource families going through the licensing process. Families who accept sibling groups of 4 or more will receive comprehensive support services, such as:

- Every SIBS resource home will be attached to a community support agency in their respective county. This support agency will offer services such as counseling, mentoring, advocacy, and linkage to other community-based special services.
- Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) will offer the SIBS resource homes peer to peer support in their county. FAFS will also offer in-service programs focused on sibling issues.

In addition, if there are no children in placement, families will be compensated with a \$200 monthly retainer to ensure that we preserve the home for a sibling group of 4 or more.

Once the placement of a sibling group of 4 or more occurs, the SIBS resource family will receive an additional \$100 above the regular board per child in placement. This additional board rate may be utilized for recreational needs, respite care and other supportive services.

If you would like more information on participating in this program please contact your local resource family support worker.

### **What is Educational Stability?**

The New Jersey Educational Stability Act, effective September 9, 2010, mandates that CP&P coordinates with local school districts so that children in placement can stay at their current school. Resource parents will be reimbursed per mile if they transport children to and from their original school while bus transportation is being arranged by the school district. If remaining in the pre-placement school is not in a child's best interest, CP&P will coordinate the child's immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school.

## What is my educational responsibility for a child in placement?

As a resource parent, you are responsible for overseeing a child's daily school activities and consenting to routine educational matters. It's important to note that a child in care cannot be home schooled. All children in out-of-home placement must be immediately enrolled and/or attending school within 72 hours of the school placement decision.

As a resource parent, you are authorized to:

- Register a child in school
- Consent to a child's participation in elective courses of study, school activities, trips, and organized sports
- Sign report cards and permission slips for routine educational activities
- Consent to a child's participation in a voluntary fingerprint program (e.g., kidnapping prevention program), provided the police or another law enforcement agency do not retain the original or copies of the fingerprints
- Consent to a request from the school district for referral to the Child Study Team
- Serve as the parent for a handicapped child during the classification or individualized education program (IEP) process, when the parents are unavailable

As a resource parent, you are also responsible for the following school related activities:

- Ensuring that a child attends school regularly
- Encouraging good study habits
- Being involved with a child's academic progress
- Participating in routine conferences with a child's teacher and meeting with school personnel for periodic reviews or when problems arise

If the child is having problems that require special help, tell your caseworker so you both can advocate for the child with the school.

Private School: A child may be enrolled in a private or parochial school only under the following conditions:

- The child's parents and the child, when age appropriate, agree to private/parochial schooling
- The school meets the standards of the New Jersey Department of Education
- The schooling is consistent with the child's religion, or the parent does not object to the school placement if a parochial school is being considered
- No cost to CP&P is incurred

College: Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) administers several scholarship programs for foster and adoptive youth. For information about these scholarship programs, call FAFS at 1-800-222-0047.

Students should apply for federal financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, which is available from their high school guidance office or by visiting [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). The NJ Foster Care Scholars Program will assist foster students in completing the FAFSA. Call FAFS at 1-800-222-0047.

Most youth in resource care are eligible for the maximum level of federal and state financial aid. For more information call the New Jersey Department of Higher Education Financial Aid Hotline at 1-800-792-8670.

**“Helping children learn and seeing them grow and apply what they’ve learned makes my heart smile.”**

*- New Jersey Resource Parent*

## What does Tabitha's Law mean for me?

Passed on December 3, 2012, Tabitha's Law requires all parents or guardians, including resource parents, to notify their child's school if the child will be absent. It also requires that school officials contact the parent or guardian if a student is absent without a known reason. All parents, including resource parents, are legally responsible for contacting school administrators if a child in their care will be absent from school.

## What are expectations regarding babysitting?

It is the responsibility of the resource parent to ensure that children in placement receive appropriate care and supervision. The resource parent should use the same good judgment in choosing a babysitter for children in care that they would use for their own children.

## Can a minor be a babysitter?

An adolescent who is the resource parent's child, a relative's child, or neighbor's child who is of sufficient reliability and maturity can care for children in care. The adolescent may serve as a babysitter for an amount of time consistent with the babysitter's maturity and the child's needs. This care should be short-term and occur infrequently.

## Can a child in care babysit?

Since children in care should have the most normalized experience possible, they may babysit for other children in care, the resource parents' own children, or children of friends and neighbors. However, the babysitter must possess the appropriate skills and maturity. The child in care should not be used inappropriately or on a consistent basis to watch other children in the home, which would be detrimental to the child's needs and freedom.

For more information about babysitting for children in care, see FAFS Fact Sheet #4 (April, 2009) entitled: Babysitting for Children in Foster Care Placement: What You Need to Know.

## What is expected of me regarding transportation?

Transportation needs are part of the Resource Family Care Rate Assessment for each child in care. Routine transportation is the responsibility of the resource parent and is included in the base level of care rate. This includes transportation to medical appointments, school events, social and sports activities, church, shopping and other destinations.

If you provide transportation to psychological, physical therapy and other appointments for a child with special needs, you may receive a higher board rate depending on the hours spent transporting the child.

New Jersey Law requires that:

- Children from infancy to age 8 or 80 pounds or less must ride in a safety or booster seat in the back seat of a vehicle. Note: A rear-facing infant seat should never be placed in a front seat with a passenger-side airbag unless the vehicle is equipped with an air bag on/off switch that is switched in the off position. Infant seats should be secured properly and face the rear of the vehicle.
- Children under age 8 who weigh more than 80 pounds must always wear a seat belt.
- All children over the age of eight must be secured with a seatbelt while in a moving vehicle.
- No child should ride in the back or bed of a truck.

## Reminder: Never leave children unattended in a car

Reimbursement is available for purchasing an infant car seat for a child two years and under.

If you need a car seat for a child in your care, contact your child's caseworker. If the child leaves your home for placement in another resource home, the seat accompanies the child. If the child returns to his birth/legal family, the seat should be returned to CP&P.

## What do I need to know regarding bicycle helmets?

New Jersey Law requires children under the age of 14, who are operating or riding as a passenger on a two-wheeled bicycle, to wear a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet. If you purchase a helmet for a child in your care, please submit a receipt to your caseworker for reimbursement.

## Can a child in my care participate in family vacations and trips?

Taking children on family vacation and trips is strongly encouraged. It helps the children know that they are a true part of your family and enhances the bonding process.

A vacation or trip of more than three days requires notification to, and approval by, CP&P. Please consult with your caseworker at least one month before the anticipated date of departure for any planned vacation. For emergency trips, contact CP&P about your plans as soon as possible. You should always advise the caseworker of the vacation/trip dates and the location(s) where you can be reached.

If a child's planned vacation/trip with your family interferes with court-ordered parental visits, CP&P must first secure prior written consent of the birth parents and/or the court in order for the child to accompany you. If the child in your care cannot accompany your family, the caseworker, in consultation with you, will make appropriate alternative arrangements for the child during your absence.

## What is a Life Book?

Ideally, children in placement should have records of everything important in their lives.

Similar to a scrapbook, a life book can capture many and varied facets of a child's life. It should be unique and personal to each child in your care. You may wish to involve older children in this activity to identify and capture the important events in their lives.

Examples of information that may be included are:

- Photos of themselves and siblings
- Birthday cards and descriptions of favorite gifts and moments
- Special trips and vacations
- Names of teachers, schools, and school pictures
- Report cards
- Special accomplishments and awards

**“The joy I get from caring and nurturing these children is really great. I feel happy that they were given the chance to experience life like a child.”**

*- New Jersey Resource Parent*

## What are appropriate methods of discipline?

Discipline is part of parenting and should be a means of keeping children safe and teaching them appropriate behavior. It should always be used with the child's best interest at heart. Discipline should help them understand boundaries and the need to respect others and themselves.

Guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior should be established with the children when they are placed in your home. Clear and consistent communication is critically important. Different households have different expectations and a child needs to know what your specific expectations are.

Sometimes, particularly for older children, it is helpful to establish these guidelines in the presence of the caseworker. It's important to give encouragement and praise for good behavior. The consequences of unacceptable behavior also should be discussed.

Never threaten to have a child removed from your home as a means of changing their behavior.

The child also should never be deprived of meals, mail, or family contact as a method of discipline. Corporal punishment, including **HITTING, STRIKING, WHIPPING, SLAPPING, BERATING**, or any other form of punishment causing physical or emotional harm or pain must never be used.

Acceptable forms of discipline include denying privileges, such as a special activity or a favorite television program, or time outs, where the child is separated from others for a short period of time.

Never hesitate to ask for help or express frustration to your caseworker or RFSW when discipline methods aren't successful.

Remember from your pre-service training that "asking for help is a strength".

## What happens if I move?

***Moving to another County:*** If your family is moving to another New Jersey county, you may continue to provide resource family care without another home study. Your new residence will only need to be inspected to ensure it meets licensing standards for resource care. Notify your RFSW and your licensing inspector before moving to schedule a home visit/inspection.

If you have children in care, you will need prior approval for the children to move with you. Maintaining stability is crucial for children in care, so strong consideration is given to the children remaining in your home.

***Moving to another State:*** If your family is relocating to another state, you must first obtain several approvals before bringing the child in your care with you on your out of state move.

CP&P must first determine if such a move is in the child's interests. Parental, administrative, and judicial approvals are also required.

After all the required approvals have been granted, you will continue to receive board and clothing payments from CP&P. You will also receive information about medical and other services available from the state where you are relocating.

CP&P will make arrangements for the appropriate agency from your new state to supervise your home and the child in your care. The new state will periodically visit your home and submit reports to CP&P. Some states may require that the appropriate authority in that state license your home.

## What occurs if a child returns to resource family care?

The law requires CP&P to file specific plans for children who need to re-enter placement after having been reunified with their parents. CP&P recognizes that consistent care is important in a child's life. Unless there are reasons to preclude it, CP&P will attempt to place a child with their former resource family. The child's relationship with the former resource family can make the placement process less traumatic. Priority will be given to placing a child re-entering resource care with a resource family caring for the child's sibling.

# Health Care

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## What is Medicaid?

New Jersey provides Medicaid in two ways:

1. **Fee-for-Service (FSS) or "regular Medicaid":** Participants (Individuals enrolled in Medicaid) are seen by an approved Medicaid provider who bills Medicaid directly for payment.
2. **Medicaid Managed Care (MMC):** Participants are enrolled in a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) that manages their healthcare and provides services. With MMC, a primary care physician (PCP) is selected or assigned. All routine care must be received through the PCP. Referrals from the PCP are required for all specialists.

Medicaid contracts with four HMO programs that provide care for children in placement.

Benefits are identical among the four HMOs. Every child in placement enrolled in a HMO will have a care manager from the HMO who will work with the CP&P Child Health Unit nurse to assist resource parents and caregivers to coordinate services that meet the medical needs of each child.

For information about enrolling in a MMO, contact the Health Benefits Coordinator at 1-800-701-0710.

## Can I consent to routine and emergency medical care?

Upon entering resource family care, each child receives a medical examination at the time of placement. Either you or your caseworker will take the child for the exam.

As the child's resource parent, you are responsible for:

- Arranging and consenting to routine medical and dental care for your child, including an annual comprehensive evaluation and examination.
- Contacting CP&P immediately whenever emergency care is required. During weekends and after hours call the 24-hour SCR hotline at 1-877-652-2873.
- Consenting to emergency care, including hospital admission, only when immediate consent is critical to the child's well-being and when CP&P cannot be reached. You must notify CP&P as soon as possible after consenting to emergency medical treatment.
- Notifying CP&P of any health needs that the child may develop while in your care.

## What are the Child Health Units?

The Child Health Units (CHU) are located in each CP&P Local Office. The CHU nurse partners with CP&P staff and resource families to ensure each child receives quality health care while in out-of-home placement. Each CHU is staffed with a clinical nurse coordinator, health care case managers (nurses), and staff assistants. Every child in CP&P custody is assigned a CHU nurse who will visit the child in the resource family home within three weeks of placement. The CHU assists resource families in achieving DCF health care priorities for each child. These priorities include:

- A Comprehensive Medical Exam (CME) within 30 days of placement.
- Appropriate well child and preventative care services, including immunizations.
- Semi-annual dental exams for children aged three and above.
- Creating a Health Passport which includes health history and current health care needs.
- Ensuring children with a suspected mental health issue receive appropriate assessments and follow up care.

## Can I administer psychotropic medication to a child in my care?

For children who need psychotropic medication as part of a treatment plan, the CP&P caseworker will obtain informed consent from the child's parent or legal guardian. In the absence of a parent or guardian, the Local Office Manager may provide consent. Informed consent for the prescription of psychotropic medication should be documented in the child's case record.

Resource parents may not provide consent for psychotropic medications.

CP&P Administrative Code 10:122C-7.4 mandates the following before any psychotropic medication is administered to a child in placement:

- The resource family parent, in conjunction with the CP&P or contract agency caseworker, should ensure the child is assessed by a psychiatrist, mental health clinical nurse specialist, or mental health nurse practitioner, to determine the need for and possible risks and side effects of the psychotropic medication; and that the resource family parent is knowledgeable about the indications for the use of the medication, as well as the therapeutic benefits and side effects of such medication.
- The resource family parent should not administer psychotropic medication as a punishment or for the convenience of the resource family parent.
- The resource family parent should ensure that psychotropic medication is stored in an area inaccessible to children.

Additionally, the resource family parent should ensure that the child in placement receiving psychotropic medication is monitored as follows:

- Report immediately any observed side effects from the medication to the CP&P or contract agency caseworker and the prescribing psychiatrist, mental health clinical nurse specialist, or mental health nurse practitioner.
- In conjunction with the CP&P or contract agency caseworker, the resource family should ensure that the psychiatrist, mental health clinical nurse specialist, or mental health nurse practitioner reviews the child's status, behavior, well-being, progress, side effects and reason for continuing the medication every 30 days, or as the psychotropic medication team deems necessary.
- Maintain a medication log indicating the child's name, type of psychotropic medication, and the date and time the medication is administered.

Resource Parents are encouraged to contact the Local Office CHU with any questions or concerns about a child's physical and/or mental health needs.

## How do I obtain mental health services for a child in my care?

PerformCare is the state-wide Contracted System Administrator (CSA) for the Children's System of Care (CSOC). PerformCare helps resource families obtain appropriate services for children up to age 21 with behavioral health or developmental disability needs. For more information or to access services visit [www.performcarenj.org](http://www.performcarenj.org) or call PerformCare's toll free number at 1-877-652-7624.

Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) respond to situations where youth are exhibiting emotional or behavioral challenges that may jeopardize their current living arrangement. The MRSS provides face-to-face crisis response within an hour's notice. MRSS seeks to stabilize the child's behavior and maintain the child's placement in the resource home.

Families of youth discharged from a psychiatric screening center are automatically eligible for MRSS. MRSS is available 24 hours/7 days a week and can offer up to 8 weeks of stabilization services. Services are available by calling 1-877-652-7624.

## When should children be immunized?

All children in resource family care are required to receive prescribed immunizations.

By the time children in your care are two years of age, they should have received four doses of Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) vaccine; four doses of Hemophilus Influenza Type B (Hib) vaccine; three doses of polio vaccine; and one dose of Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine.

It is recommended that children receive the Hepatitis B anti-infection vaccine. Consult with your pediatrician for the schedule of all other recommended children's vaccines.

Due to their potentially compromised immune systems, children infected with the HIV virus should have immunizations with the recommendation of their HIV managing physician.

**“It's wonderful watching the children thrive through love, nourishment, and structure, and giving them the tools for success.”**

*- New Jersey Resource Parent*

## Who is eligible for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program?

The Department of Health and Senior Services administers the Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC) program, which provides specified nutritious supplemental foods to infants and children up to their fifth birthday. These children have been determined to be at “nutritional risk” primarily because of inadequate nutrition and inadequate income. Some of the foods available to WIC clients include iron fortified formula, cereal high in iron, fruit or vegetable juice high in Vitamin C, fortified whole milk, fortified evaporated milk, cheese, and eggs.

Children in placement are considered income-eligible for WIC benefits. Eligible children are occasionally placed on a waiting list.

# CP&P Policy and Practice

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## What are DCF Policies?

DCF is devoted to communicating policies and procedures by which DCF provides its services. Policy and procedures are issued by the Department and its divisions and offices. For more information regarding the department's policy and to search the policy manual, visit [http://www.nj.gov/dcf/policy\\_manuals/toc.shtml](http://www.nj.gov/dcf/policy_manuals/toc.shtml).

## What are External and Internal Case Reviews?

### *Child Placement Review (CPR) Board - Enhanced 45 Day Review*

The New Jersey Child Placement Review (CPR) System dates back to the enactment of the Child Placement Review Act in 1978. The act created review boards in each New Jersey county. The Boards consist of court appointed citizen volunteers who are charged with monitoring the cases of all children placed outside their homes by CP&P. The goal of the Board is to ensure that children are timely returned to their birth parents or placed in alternative permanent homes.

The Board reviews a case once, 45 days after CP&P places a child. This comprehensive, structured and informative session for parents, resource parents, CP&P caseworkers and other child welfare stakeholders.

If you are unable to attend, you should consider sending a written update about how the child is doing and any concerns and issues.

After completing its review, the CPR Board makes a recommendation to the court about the placement.

The court considers the recommendation and makes a final decision about whether the placement should continue and/or whether the case plan and services are appropriate. More information about this process is available at:

[http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/directive/2010/Dir\\_04\\_10.pdf](http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/directive/2010/Dir_04_10.pdf)

## Regional Placement Conference

An objective third-party CP&P staff person conducts periodic reviews, known as a Regional Placement Conference, for all children in out-of-home placements. The first formal review occurs 5 months after placement. A second review occurs after 10 months of placement. The child's parents, the child (if appropriate), the resource parents and other interested parties participate in the review. As a member of the CP&P team, you will receive notification of this review and are encouraged to participate either by providing information about the child to the caseworker in preparation for the review, and/or by attending the review.

## Permanency Hearings

The court holds a permanency hearing no later than 12 months after the child has been in placement.

It provides review and approval of the child's placement plan by the court. Any hearing held before the Family Part of the Court may serve as a permanency hearing, if it provides the review and approval of the child's permanency plan.

Resource parents are notified of, and given an opportunity to be heard at, all hearings.

## What is the Case Practice Model?

The Case Practice Model (CPM) provides guidelines on how children and families are to be treated, and how children and their natural support networks will participate in the decisions affecting the child's safety and well-being. It is a strengths-based and family-centered model of practice that helps achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children. Some crucial aspects of CPM include: quality investigation and assessment; engaging youth and families; working with family teams; individualized planning and provision of relevant services; continuous review and adaptation; and safe and sustained transition from DCF involvement.

More information about CPM is available at [www.nj.gov/dcf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf).

## What are Family Team Meetings and who attends them?

Family team meetings are a gathering of a team that is comprised of family members, friends, foster parents, legal custodians, community specialists and other interested people identified by the family who join together to strengthen and empower the family. The purpose of family team meetings are to engage the family and involve them and the team in the decision making and planning process with CP&P. The team helps the family and CP&P collaboratively make viable plans and decisions on behalf of the child and his/her family to achieve child safety, child permanency, and ensures child and family well-being.

Resource parents are encouraged to participate in family team meetings when asked by the family. Resource parents may also conduct their own family team meeting with a CP&P facilitator to help them plan and ensure the needs of the child are being met.

## How can I resolve an issue with CP&P?

Resource Parents may dispute or appeal CP&P actions or decisions. Depending on the dispute, Resource Parents can initiate any dispute resolution technique by contacting:

- Your caseworker and/or caseworker supervisor
- Your Resource Family Support Worker (RFSW) and/or supervisor of the RFSW
- The CP&P Information Number at 1-855-INFO-DCF (1-855-463-6323)
- Office of Advocacy 1-877-543-7864
- The Administrative Hearings Coordinator at 609-292-8715
- Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) at 1-800-222-0047 also provides information and assists in resolving disagreements with CP&P (peer to peer advocates)

**Disruption Conference:** The decision to permanently remove a child from a resource home is made in an informed and planned manner. The resource parent is invited to participate in a meeting, called a disruption conference, to discuss the reasons for the proposed removal. If the resource parent does not agree with the decision reached at the disruption conference, the resource parent may be eligible for a dispositional conference.

Whenever possible, a disruption conference is conducted before removing a child to ensure that moving the child is the most appropriate way to respond to an emergency situation in a resource home.

If there is no opportunity to conduct the conference prior to an emergency removal, the conference is held within 72 hours of the child's removal.

A disruption conference is not required, but is encouraged, when the disruption is at the request of the resource parent.

**Dispositional Conference:** This is conducted by an objective, third party CP&P representative. This representative may either review the documents and record involving a placement or conduct a hearing. If a hearing is scheduled, you have an opportunity to present testimony, provide and examine witnesses, and review CP&P records. CP&P records containing confidential information may not be reviewed.

Resource Parents may choose to be represented by an attorney, friend, relative or any other individual.

**Court Orders:** Any dispute regarding a CP&P action that is the subject of an existing court order that specifically addresses the disputed action must be resolved in the trial court that has jurisdiction over the disputed matter. Cases for which a legal guardian for the child must be appointed also are resolved in the appropriate trial court.

**Dispute Time Frames for CP&P Decisions or Actions:** If you are notified by CP&P of a formal decision or action (for example, you receive a letter indicating that your resource home is being closed), you may dispute the decision within 10 calendar days of the date of the letter. The Division is then required to acknowledge your request for appeal in writing within 10 business days. The written notification will inform you of the right to a dispositional conference, an administrative hearing, or both, if appropriate, and the procedures to follow.

You may request a dispositional resolution over any formal CP&P action. Most importantly, you should do so within the required 10 day time frame.

**The Office of Advocacy:** Anyone with concerns or questions can call the Office of Advocacy toll free at 1-877-543-7864, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and by email at [askdcf@dcf.state.nj.us](mailto:askdcf@dcf.state.nj.us).

## What occurs if someone makes a complaint about a resource parent?

CP&P may have concern or receive a complaint about the care resource parents are providing a child placed in their home. These concerns or complaints are categorized as either child welfare concern or an abuse/neglect allegation.

## Investigations of Abuse or Neglect in Resource Family Homes

CP&P is required to investigate all allegations of abuse and neglect. The Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse and/or neglect in resource homes. When IAIU receives an allegation, the placement of any additional children in the home is suspended. Investigations conducted by IAIU conform to the standards of investigation used in other out-of-home settings, such as residential facilities and schools. At the conclusion of the investigation, IAIU will make a determination regarding the allegation.

### The four determinations are:

**Substantiated:** a preponderance of the evidence that a child is an abused or neglected child, in that the child has been harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm by a parent, caregiver, temporary caregiver, or institutional caregiver.

**Established:** the preponderance of the evidence indicates that a child IS an “abused or neglected child”, but where the act or acts committed or omitted do not warrant a finding of “Substantiated” as defined in above.

**Not Established:** there is NOT a preponderance of the evidence that a child is an abused or neglected child, BUT evidence indicates that the child was HARMED or was placed at risk of harm.

**Unfounded:** there is NOT a preponderance of the evidence indicating that a child is an abused or neglected child (i.e., child abuse or neglect did NOT occur), AND the evidence indicates that a child was NOT HARMED or placed at risk of harm, or NO “INCIDENT” OCCURRED.

Resource Parents will receive a letter informing them of the final determination. The letter also explains the rights of Resource Parents and the process to appeal the determination. Separately, the Resource Family Unit and the Office of Licensing will receive a report from IAIU outlining recommendations for remedial and/or corrective action, if needed.

Informed by IAIU’s report and recommendations, the Resource Family Unit is responsible for taking action regarding the status of your home. If an abuse allegation is substantiated, the children in care must and will be removed from your home. The Office of Licensing is responsible for revoking the license of, and closing, a resource home.

The Foster and Adoptive Family Services Resource Family Advocates can provide understanding emotional support if you have been accused of child abuse or neglect.

The FAFS Resource Family Advocates are trained in CP&P policies, procedures, and regulations regarding confidentiality and the investigative process, and are knowledgeable about child abuse and neglect laws and regulations. Their goal is to facilitate communication, clarify the process, provide current information on resources, and offer support to the resource parent under investigation. Resource Family Advocates do not offer legal advice and resource parents are not obligated to share any information with them. All rules and regulations regarding confidentiality are strictly enforced.

Assistance from a Resource Family Advocate is available by calling Foster and Adoptive Family Services at 1-800-222-0047.

## **Is there a liability program for resource parents?**

CP&P provides a Resource Parent Liability Program that includes property damage/loss, and legal representation. The program is intended to provide protection for:

- Damages or loss to your property caused by a child in placement
- Claims made by third parties against you because of the acts of a child in placement
- Claims made against you by third parties, including children in placement or persons acting on their behalf, alleging negligence on your part in the course of your resource parenting responsibilities
- Upon receiving legal documents (lawsuit) or other notice of a claim contact your resource family support worker and your insurance carrier/company simultaneously.

## **What are the licensing requirements for my resource home?**

The Office of Licensing (OOL) is the licensing and regulatory authority of the Department of Children and Families. OOL licenses and regulates resource family homes, child care centers, youth and residential programs, and adoption agencies.

## 1. Annual Inspection

The resource family parent shall permit and participate in an annual inspection of the resource family home by the Division or Office of Licensing representative to determine whether the resource family home is in compliance. In addition, an annual interview with each resource family parent, child in placement and household member by the Division and Office of Licensing will take place.

## 2. Renewal

A Renewal license occurs every three years where a comprehensive review will occur by the Office of Licensing (OOL) to ensure and verify that your home and license remains in compliance with OOL requirements.

For more details related to licensing, please speak with your Resource Family Worker or refer to the Manual of Requirements for Resource Family Parents at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/RFmanual.pdf>

## What are my in-service training responsibilities?

NJ Foster Adoptive & Kinship Parent (Resource Parent) Licensing Requirements: Primary Provider - 7 hours annually or 21 hours over a 3 year licensing cycle; Secondary Provider - 5 hours annually or 15 hours over a 3 year licensing cycle.

# Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS)

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## Who is FAFS?

Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) is a non-profit organization that provides support, training and advocacy for foster, adoptive and kinship families. FAFS is comprised of volunteers and professional staff who serve foster and adoptive families. You can reach FAFS toll free at 1-800-222-0047 or via the web at [www.fafsonline.org](http://www.fafsonline.org)

## What training does FAFS provide?

FAFS offers many training opportunities for licensed Resource families, including:

- Free Foster Adoptive and Kinship Parent Online Training (FAFS Train Online): Bridging time and distance, you will be able to take courses online at a time that is convenient for you. At this time, this service is ONLY available to licensed resource parents in NJ. Courses are available in Spanish.
- Free Foster Adoptive and Kinship Parent Home Correspondence Courses: These educational booklets address various issues you may encounter as a resource parent. Completion of these courses will give you in-service training hours that can be used towards maintaining your resource parent home license. Courses are available in Spanish.
- Free Foster Adoptive and Kinship Parent Support Group Meetings and Presentations - Local Volunteer Committees/Affiliate offer in service training hours for New Jersey resource parents through presentations by experts in various fields.
- Free Foster Adoptive and Kinship Parent Webinars (FAFS eLive Webinar Workshops): Share and learn from a wide diversity of resource parents from across New Jersey. These for credit workshops will be webinars conducted online in real time by a live instructor.

# Adoption

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## Are Resource Parents able to adopt?

Whenever adoption becomes a consideration, the child's current resource parents, if interested, are assessed as possible adoptive candidates.

N.J. law (N.J.S.A. 30:4C-26.7) mandates that resource parents who have had a child continuously in placement for two or more years shall be given "first consideration". However, CP&P has the legal authority to select adoptive parents for the child regardless of the length of the placement if another placement is in the child's best interest. If a resource parent disagrees with this decision, a Dispositional Conference can be requested.

# Recruitment

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## How can I help recruit additional resource families?

### *Resource Parent Adjunct Recruiter*

An effective partnership has been initiated between CP&P recruiters and resource parents because Resource Parents are our best recruiters. As a result, recruitment events co-sponsored by CP&P and the Resource Parents are held where the positive and poignant experiences of caring for our children are presented. Knowing community resources well, the Resource Parents also are able to collaborate, utilize, and network with organizations intrinsic to local communities. A small stipend is available for Adjunct Recruiters. If you would like more information, please contact the Recruiter in your area.

### *Statewide Speakers Bureau*

If you would like to share the joy of being a Resource Parent, join our statewide speaker's bureau. You may have an opportunity to speak to the press and at focus and panel groups about your experience as a resource parent. You will also be able to mentor new and potential resource families. Please contact 609-888-7055.

### *Honorarium Program*

The Honorarium program is our way of thanking you for recruiting families willing and able to care for our children.

You will receive \$200 for every family you have recruited that has become a licensed New Jersey Resource Parent. In addition, you could receive another \$200 if the newly licensed resource family you recruit takes a sibling placement of three or more.

Please make sure to call FAFS with the name of the family you have recruited or that the recruited family informs FAFS that you recruited them. This is necessary to ensure that you receive your honorarium.



**“The best thing about being  
a resource parent is  
caring for children who need  
a good home and love.”**

*- New Jersey Resource Parent*



## Tribute

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Thank you for partnering with CP&P to provide care and a safe and stable home for vulnerable children. You are lovingly embracing children who have experienced great trauma, welcoming them into your homes, families and hearts. You are giving them unconditional love, furnishing them emotional warmth from a safe and loving family and helping them heal. You are showing that children can thrive and succeed thanks to a loving environment and a loving family.



