

# THE NATIONAL FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

# CODE *of* ETHICS *for* FOSTER PARENTS

## PREAMBLE

This mission of the National Foster Parent Association is to be a respected national voice for foster, kinship, and adoptive families through networking, education, and advocacy.

The Code of Ethics for Foster Parents begins by emphasizing that family foster care is an integral component of the child welfare system which:

- Recognizes the rights of children and youth to safe, nurturing relationships, intended to last a lifetime;
- Assists parents to regain custody or make alternative plans, intended to last a lifetime, for their children and youth;
- Emphasizes the developmental needs of children and youth;
- Provides all children with foster parents and child welfare professionals who have the skills to support safety, developmental, and permanency needs, and ensure supports necessary to develop and use these skills;
- Ensures that family foster care is part of a comprehensive, coordinated, inter-disciplinary service delivery system;
- Provides legal representation to ensure timely and skillful responses to service plans involving court proceedings;
- Collects, analyzes, and disseminates accurate and relevant data about children, youth, and all their families leading to informed policies, programs, and practices;
- Supports family foster care – and all child welfare services – with effective and accountable leadership in city halls, governors’ offices, national organizations, the judiciary, the federal government, Congress, and the White House.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Code of Ethics is a public statement by the National Foster Parent Association that sets clear expectations and principles to articulate basic values and guide practice. Family foster care is a public trust that requires foster parents, with essential supports from their agencies, to be dedicated to service for the welfare of the children in their care. All foster parents have an obligation to maintain and improve the practice of fostering, continuously examine, use, and increase the knowledge upon which fostering is based, and perform the service of fostering with dignity, integrity, and competence.

## PRINCIPLES

Foster parenting requires competencies in the following domains:

- Principle 1:** Providing a safe and secure environment
- Principle 2:** Providing a loving, nurturing, stable family care environment.
- Principle 3:** Modeling healthy family living to help children, youth, and families learn and practice skills for safe and supportive relationships.
- Principle 4:** Providing positive guidance that promotes self-respect while respecting culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and agency policy.
- Principle 5:** Promoting and supporting positive relationships among children, youth, and their families to the fullest possible extent.
- Principle 6:** Meeting physical and mental health care needs.
- Principle 7:** Promoting educational attainment and success.
- Principle 8:** Promoting social and emotional development.
- Principle 9:** Supporting permanency plans.
- Principle 10:** Growing as a foster parent - skill development and role clarification; participation in training, professional or skill development, and foster parent support organizations and associations.
- Principle 11:** Arranging activities to meet children's individual recreational, cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and spiritual needs, commensurate with agency policy.
- Principle 12:** Preparing children and youth for self-sufficient and responsible adult lives.
- Principle 13:** Meeting and maintaining all licensing or approval requirements.
- Principle 14:** Advocating for resources to meet the unique needs of the children and youth in their care.
- Principle 15:** Collaborating with other foster parents and the child welfare team, building trust and respecting confidentiality.
- Principle 16:** Promoting decisions that are in the best interest of children and youth, promoting safety, well-being, and permanence.
- Principle 17:** Supporting relationships between children and youth and their families.
- Principle 18:** Working as a team member.

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## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Code of Ethics for foster parents is based on the definition of family foster care established by the National Commission on Family Foster Care, sponsored by the Child Welfare League of America and the National Foster Parent Association in 1991. It reframed the historical term, “foster family care” to “family foster care,” to emphasize the importance of family. This is based on the premise established by the first White House Conference on Children in 1909 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1997 that children need and have the right to a family life. Family foster care is an essential child welfare service option for children and parents who must live apart while maintaining legal and, usually, affectional ties. When children and parents must be separated because of the tragedy of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, maltreatment, or special circumstances, family foster care provides a planned, goal-directed service in which the care of children and youth takes place in the home of an agency-approved family. The value of family foster care is that it can respond to the unique, individual needs of infants, children, youth, and their families through the strength of family living, and through family and community supports. The goal of family foster care is to provide opportunities for healing, growth, and development, leading to healthier infants, children, and youth, and families, with safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.

The NFPA has an inclusive perspective in which foster parents may also provide kinship care, serve as guardians, be known as resource parents, or provide foster/adoptive care.

## CONTEXT

A Code of Ethics for Foster Parents must be viewed within the context of the service delivery system in which individual foster parents are affiliated. Foster parents recognize that while they have the solemn responsibility for the 24-hour care of the children who have joined their families, their abilities and resources are influenced by the caseworkers or agency staff with whom they most closely work. The National Foster Parent Association encourages child welfare professionals to consider the major principles of the code of ethics for social workers, advanced by the National Association of Social Workers: competence, dignity, integrity, importance of human relationships, service, and social justice.



## MISSION

To be a respected national voice for foster, kinship, and adoptive families through networking, education, and advocacy.

## WHO WE ARE

The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) is a non-profit organization established in 1972 to address the concerns of several independent groups of foster parents and child welfare professionals to provide foster families with opportunities for advocacy, networking, and education. Organized by Helen D. Stone, MSW, Foster Care Program Director at the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), and Beatrice L. Garrett, MSW, Specialist on Foster Family Services at the U.S. Children's Bureau, the NFPA was created as a non-profit association with a volunteer Board of Directors and paid staff. The NFPA has grown from an original group of 926 foster parents, 210 social workers, and 59 other professionals to an organization that represents thousands of foster families nationwide through foster parent affiliate associations organized by a Council of State Affiliates.

## VISION

To embrace our Mission and become a respected source of timely and quality education focused on the children in our care and to provide technical support to state parent organizations. Our vision is supported through the emphasis that family foster care is an integral component of the child welfare system; therefore our vision includes advocating for outcomes that ensure foster, kinship and adoptive families are recruited, assessed, trained, and supported with evidence-based or informed best practices and receive timely comprehensive resources so the children in their care are safe, nurtured, and have lasting relationships.

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