

Resource Parent Bill of Rights

The Maine Resource Parents Bill of Rights provides foster, adoptive and kinship families and Maine child welfare staff with a document to ensure that the OCFS resource parent community is treated with dignity, respect, trust, value and consideration as a primary provider of foster, adoptive and kinship care and a member of the professional team caring for foster children. It is further recognized that the resource parent community plays an integral, indispensable and vital role in the state's effort to care for children in need of out-of-home placement.

This Resource Parent Bill of Rights is intended for all Maine families who are caring for children in the custody of Maine Department of Health and Human Services. This includes: traditional foster families, treatment foster families, kinship families, and pre-adoptive and adoptive families.

Resource Parents shall:

1. Be key partners in the care of children in state custody. Resource parents will be given the opportunity to provide their input and receive prompt notice of decision making which impacts a foster child placed in their care:

- Resource parents shall be invited to family team meetings, whenever possible.
- Resource parents shall collaborate with caseworkers regarding scheduling appointments, whenever possible.
- Resource parents shall receive a 48-hour advanced notice of any meeting to which they are invited, whenever possible.

2. Be included in the permanency planning process:

- Resource parents shall be involved in discussions prior to permanency decisions being made.
- Resource parents shall be informed of the goals and objectives of a child's permanency plan in order to support the achievement of timeframes for permanency.

3. Be included in any communication which impacts their role as a resource parent:

- Resource parents shall be informed of as much information as possible about a child (including the reason a child entered custody; school- related information; and known medical information pertaining to child).
- Resource parents shall receive information regarding Department policies related to their role or to the child in their care.

4. Provide input to the Department to identify the types of resources and services that would meet the needs of children currently in their care:

- Resource parents shall assist the Department in finding local supports and services for the children in their care.
- Resource parents shall advocate for appropriate supports and services for the children in their care.
- Resource parents shall assist in providing information during mental health, academic and medical assessments/evaluations.
- Resource parents shall communicate with other professionals who work with the child in their care including therapists, physicians, and teachers.

5. Receive supports and services that ensure success in their role:

- Resource parents shall have access to training that will increase their understanding of their role as a participant in meetings.
- Resource parents shall have the opportunity to participate in training that will assist them in making an informed decision when asked to consider accepting placement of a child.
- Resource parents shall be provided with visitation training to clarify expectations, roles, and responsibilities prior to being asked to supervise a visit.

6. Continue with their own family values, beliefs and cultures while adhering to state laws and regulations:

- Resource parents shall maintain their own family values and routines while respecting those of a child placed in their home.
- Resource parents shall be given information and training that specifically addresses the cultural needs of children, including but not limited to, information on skin and hair care and specific religious or cultural practices of the child or the child's biological family.

7. Receive prompt payment for eligible reimbursable services:

- Resource parents shall have access to the Transportation Policy (V.G-3).
- Resource parents shall have access to travel reimbursement forms.
- Resource parents shall have prompt board payments that are proportionate to the age and needs of the child and according to the Clothing & Incidental Expenses Policy (V. G-2) and the Levels of Care Policy (V.G-1). Board payments are subject to availability of funding.