



**ALBERTA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE
Client Handbook**

**Introduction to Alberta Professional Services
A CARF Accredited Agency**

1. Agency Location:

- a. Official Agency Title: Alberta Professional Services, Inc.
- b. Greensboro Address and contact information:

Mailing address:
Alberta Professional Services
P.O. Box 14884
Greensboro, NC 27415

Physical address:
Alberta Professional Services
3107 S. Elm-Eugene St
Greensboro NC 27406

Phone: 336-273-2640

Fax: 336-273-6522

www.albertakids.com

2. Agency Mission Statement:

To facilitate the growth, independence and quality of life of all persons served through:

- Assuring their health and safety.
- Considering their preferences, cultural backgrounds, and personal traits.
- Facilitating access to effective services designed to address their individual needs.
- Providing mental health and habilitation services based on best professional practices.
- Serving them in the least restrictive appropriate setting.
- Maximizing opportunities for integration into their community.
- Valuing them and their opinions, including their satisfaction with the services we provide.
- Advocating for their right to receive services actually needed, rather than requiring consumers of MH/IDD/SA services to choose only from what has been made available. This includes an inherent right to live with dignity and respect in the least restrictive setting appropriate for their needs and as independently as their psychological and developmental resources allows.

3. Alberta's Foster Care Program:

- a. Type of Service: Licensed Therapeutic Foster Care (Residential Level II - Family Type). The number of clients served in an Alberta foster care home is determined by the State licensing authority (NC DSS located in Black Mountain). Alberta supervises and maintains all administrative and clinical aspects of the foster care services and seeks to ensure that the home continuously meets foster care licensing standards.
- b. Fees: Alberta Professional Services establishes fees for Therapeutic Foster Care based on the then current per diem reimbursement rate for

treatment established by the State's Medicaid program plus standard State DSS Room and Board payments. Currently these are \$90.39 per day for treatment plus \$475 to \$634 per month for room and board depending on the client's age. These rates are all inclusive and may be reduced by Alberta on an individual basis based on such factors as the consumer's finances, availability of other funds, the agency's financial situation, as well as projected length of stay and difficulty of care.

- c. Insurance: "Private pay" insurance policies do not normally cover any of the costs or fees associated with therapeutic foster care. Alberta as a registered business corporation does maintain the standard professional and related liability insurance coverage as is required by our many contractual relationships with public human service agencies.
- d. Hours of Operation: Direct care and supervision are provided when the client is in the home or on family outings and as otherwise set by the client's service plans including their PCP. Therapeutic Foster Parents and an APS social worker are available for such other responsibilities as school meetings, treatment review meetings, professional appointments, etc.
- e. Program Goals: The primary goal of our foster care services is the reduction in behaviors that have resulted in out of home placement in order to achieve family reunification whenever possible and deemed appropriate. We also seek to promote the progressive development of our clients' basic living, social, emotional and behavioral skills so that they may live successfully in their community and achieve a level of independence that is appropriate for their age, abilities, and individual resources. In addition each client has individual goals developed by their community treatment team with their input. These goals are identified in a Person Centered Plan or similar service plan, which has quantifiable goals that are reviewed at least annually.
- f. Program Model & Philosophy:
 - (1) Meaning, Purpose, and Hopefulness.

We encourage those in our care to *experience* hopefulness, purpose and joy in their lives as well as develop respect for themselves, their culture, history, and traditions. We promote this experience through fostering self-determination and developmentally appropriate choices for the client and when possible their family. The client's spiritual development is encouraged through artistic and creative endeavors as well as community service to others. Their religious preferences and traditions are respected.
 - (2) Skills and Knowledge.

We encourage our clients to successfully develop, practice, and use daily living skills as well as social and other adaptive behaviors so that

they made progress towards greater independence. In addition we believe that ongoing learning of new skills and competences throughout life is important source of satisfaction for everyone and especially so for youth who should experience the joy of learning and growth in an academic setting.

We encourage the development of our clients' skills and abilities through building on strengths. We celebrate their successes by highlighting accomplishments and "catching residents doing right." Mistakes are human and we see them as "teachable moments".

(3) Security, Industry, and Personal Enjoyment.

We encourage our clients to feel safe and secure, and we understand that without this security they will not progress towards achieving other goals. We believe that all people need to feel industrious that their time is being used wisely and they are progressing towards their goals. We believe that everyone has the right to play and to find joy in his or her lives.

We encourage security through the maintenance of a safe, predictable environment as free as possible from harm and chaos. We provide our clients with a predictable schedule that is appropriate for their developmental level and needs. We understand that recreational opportunities and activities are important in their own right and that we encourage our clients take up new hobbies and interests.

We encourage the development and maintenance of caring relationships with family, adults, peers, and pets. We encourage residents to develop respect for their own feelings as well as the feelings of others within the context of relationships.

We encourage the growth of caring relationships with residents through modeling positive social skills, empathy and other socially appropriate behaviors. The successful foster parent may serve as a "bridge" to assist the client in developing and maintaining improved family relationships as are appropriate for the family's situation. The skills necessary to improve family and other social relationships are taught our clients through example, encouragement, praise, and verbal guidance.

(4) Community-Centered Living:

We encourage the individuals we serve to learn the skills necessary for living in the community of their residence in order to remain in the most "normal," rewarding, and family-like setting possible. Community-centered living is fostered through attending and participating in activities in the community while encouraging and guiding our clients through positive interactions with individuals in their community of residence. Even if the special needs of a client prohibit them from remaining in their community of origin, they can learn adaptive skills needed to be a successful member of their community of residence.

The following Agency Procedures are attached to inform and assist clients and guardians in applying for admission to our foster care services, in knowing what to expect from Alberta and our foster parents, and in understanding their rights.

ADMISSION PROCESS:

A Pre-Admission Screening/Referral Form will be completed on children referred for our foster care services. The pre-admission process will include an interview with the client, the professional making the referral, the parent/guardian, and other individuals concerned. In cases where emergency placements are necessary this process may be streamlined as needed.

Information that will be needed to complete the pre-admission screening process includes:

- identifying information: name, address, birthday, Medicaid and/or social security number
- presenting problems
- person or agency making the referral
- guardian's name, address, and phone number
- relevant history including: family, social, educational, medical, and prior placement/service

The parent / guardian / legal custodian must have completed an Application/Intake study for services prior to placing a child. Placements will not be made until a complete Application is provided. Exceptions may be granted by the Director in emergency situations based on the best interests of the child.

In situations where children are referred but not accepted for placement other service recommendations may be offered.

Once the application process is complete a decision on accepting the child will be made within three days. If the client is accepted additional information will be needed prior to admission:

- copy of birth certificate
- copy of Medicaid and/or insurance card
- immunization record
- current medical examination (within the last 12 months)
- withdrawal from current school if necessary
- copy of court orders
- visitation / contact plan
- current prescribed medications and dosages, doctor's order
- medication release of information
- permission to seek emergency medical care
- emergency contact information
- authorization to administer non-prescription medication
- consent for overnight and other travel
- consent for audio-visual recording, if applicable
- signed placement agreement

CLIENT'S RIGHTS:

Agency Foster Parents and staff shall ensure that each foster child:

- (1) has clothing to wear that is appropriate to the weather;
- (2) is allowed to have personal property;
- (3) is encouraged to express opinions on issues concerning care;
- (4) is provided care in a manner that recognizes variations in cultural values and traditions;
- (5) is provided the opportunity for spiritual development and is not denied the right to practice religious beliefs;
- (6) is not identified in connection with the supervising agency in any way that would bring the child or the child's family embarrassment;
- (7) is not forced to acknowledge dependency on or gratitude to the foster parents;
- (8) is encouraged to contact and have telephone conversations with family members, when not contraindicated in the child's visitation and contact plan;
- (9) is provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience;
- (10) is not subjected to cruel or abusive punishment;
- (11) is not subjected to corporal punishment;
- (12) is not deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving. The foster parent may use isolation time-out as a behavioral control measure when the foster parent provides it within hearing distance of a foster parent. The length of time alone shall be appropriate to the child's age and development;
- (13) is not subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about himself/herself or his/her families;
- (14) is provided a daily routine in the home that promotes a positive mental health environment and provides an opportunity for normal activities with time for rest and play;
- (15) is provided training in good health habits, including proper eating, frequent bathing, and good grooming. Each child shall be provided food with nutritional content for normal growth and health. Any diets prescribed by a licensed medical provider shall be provided;
- (16) is provided medical care in accordance with the treatment prescribed for the child;
- (17) of mandatory school age maintains regular school attendance unless the child has been excused by the authorities;
- (18) is encouraged to participate in neighborhood and group activities, have friends visit the home and visit in the homes of friends;
- (19) assumes responsibility for himself/herself and household duties in accordance with his/her age, health, and ability. Household tasks shall not interfere with school, sleep, or study periods;
- (20) is provided opportunities to participate in recreational activities;
- (21) is not permitted to do any task which is in violation of child labor laws or not appropriate for a child of that age;
- (22) is provided supervision in accordance with the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and experience; and

- (23) if less than eight years of age and weighs less than 80 pounds is properly secured in a child passenger restraint system that is approved and installed in a manner authorized by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.

SUMMARY OF CLIENT RIGHTS to be provided all clients:

- Basic human rights, which include dignity, privacy, respect and humane care.
- Right to freedom from mental and physical abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation.
- Right to live as normally as possible while receiving care and treatment.
- Right to treatment in the least restrictive, most appropriate environment.
- Right to receive age-appropriate treatment/habilitation.
- Right to have access to medical care.
- Right to individualized written plan for care within 30 days of admission.
- Right to be informed in advance of potential risks and alleged benefits of treatment services.
- Right to consent or refuse to consent to any treatment offered, except in certain emergencies.
- Right to be informed of any emergency procedure.
- Right to confidentiality (with exceptions as allowed or required by NC General Statutes including 122C-52 through 122C-56 such as in cases of imminent danger to the client or other persons or the or likelihood of the commission of a serious or violent crime).
- Right to be free from unnecessary or excessive medication and from the use of medication for punishment, discipline or staff convenience.
- Right to exercise all Civil Rights (such as right to dispose of property, execute instruments, make purchases, enter into contractual relationships, register and vote, bring civil actions, marry and divorce) unless client is adjudicated incompetent.
- Right to be free from corporal punishment.
- Right to be free from physical restraint or seclusion except when there is imminent danger of abuse or injury to self or others, when substantial property damage is occurring, or when necessary as part of treatment/habilitation.
- Right to social integration and self governance while in programs.
- Right to be free from threat of unwarranted suspension or expulsion.
- Right to file a grievance.
- Right to contact advocacy services including the Disability Rights of NC (877-235-4210).
- Right to be informed of any restrictions or interventions that may be used.
- Right to request notification after occurrence of use of an intervention procedure.
- Right to request notification of the restriction of rights.
- Right to have medication administered only in accordance with accepted medical standards and upon the order of a physician.
- Right to written individual Discharge Plan available at the time of planned discharge.

Additional Rights - Adults - in 24-Hour Facilities:

(subject to some modification as specified by State policy)

- Right to access services for physical ailments.
- Right to send/receive mail.
- Right to individualized written Discharge Plan with recommendations for further services.
- Right to contact and consult with private professionals, including legal counsel.
- Right to contract and consult with client advocate.
- Right to make/receive confidential telephone calls.
- Right to receive visitors at specified times and to have visits outside the facility.
- Right to communicate and meet under supervision with other consenting individuals.
- Right to be out-of-doors daily and have access to physical exercise regularly.
- Right to keep/use personal clothing and possessions.
- Right to participate in religious worship.
- Right to keep/spend reasonable sum of own money.
- Right to retain driver's license.
- Right to individual storage space.
- Right to dignity, privacy and humane care for health/hygiene needs.
- Right to assistance with managing personal funds.

Additional Rights - Minors - in 24-Hour Facilities:

(subject to some modification as specified by State policy)

- Right to have access to proper adult supervision and guidance.
- Right to communicate and consult with parent/guardian/legal custodian.
- Right to contact and consult with legal counsel or other professionals.
- Right to contact and consult with client advocate.
- Right to make/receive phone calls.
- Right to send/receive mail and access to writing materials, postage, and assistance.
- Right to receive visitors under supervision.
- Right to receive special education and vocational training as per state and federal laws.
- Right to be outside daily and have access to play, recreation, and physical exercise.
- Right to keep/use personal clothing and possessions.
- Right to participate in religious worship.
- Right to have access to and spend a reasonable sum of own money.
- Right to individual storage space.
- Right to driver's license, if applicable.

CLIENT/CONSUMER GRIEVANCE PROCESS:

At the time of placement, APS shall provide to each child and birth parents (if involved and the client is a minor) as well as the client's guardian, or legal custodian (if different from the parents) known in this procedure individually and collectively as "consumer" or "consumers":

- (1) A written description of procedures that the consumers should follow to register complaints;
- (2) Information about the consumers' rights;
- (3) The process for appealing a decision or action of the Agency;
- (4) The process for resolution of a complaint.

Upon resolution of a grievance the Agency shall maintain a copy of the complaint and the resolution in the client's record.

Any consumer who wishes to file a complaint about the services they are receiving from the Agency may request a meeting with the foster care program director for this purpose. This request may be verbal or in writing with *no specific form* being required but the consumer should in their own words specify the nature of the complaint including what rules, actions, individuals, etc. are at issue and what resolution they are seeking. The consumer may have the assistance of their social worker, case manager, or other professional involved in their care in preparing and presenting the complaint.

If either party requests a meeting to hear the complaint then the program director or his/her designee shall arrange for such a meeting at a time of mutual convenience which shall be within 10 days of being first informed of the complaint unless a longer time period is requested by the consumer. The program director shall inform the consumer of the decision reached in a timely manner but no later than 10 days after a meeting held to hear the complaint.

If the consumer is not satisfied with the program director's decision, then the decision may be appealed within 30 days by the consumer to the Agency's Executive Director. This appeal shall be in writing and follow the process as outlined above for filing and hearing the original complaint including the 10 day time frame for scheduling a meeting to hear the complaint and 10 day time frame for informing the client of the decision reached after the complaint is heard.

In addition if the client is placed with Alberta through a contract between Alberta and a county Department of Social Services and/or a Local Mental Health Management Entity, then the consumer may by these agencies policies have the option of filing a complaint with either of these agencies and having their complaint heard in a manner consistent with those policies.

Finally, each consumer and his or her legally responsible person has the right to contact the Disability Rights North Carolina for Persons with Disabilities (1-877-235-4210) which is the statewide agency designated under federal and state law to protect and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities.

SEARCH PROCEDURES:

Foster parents contracted by Alberta Professional Services will adhere to the Agency's written procedures regarding conducting searches of children's rooms and possessions. The following procedures are to be discussed with the parents, guardian, or legal custodian and child prior to or upon placement. The Agency and Foster Parents must ensure that each client served will be free from unwarranted invasion of privacy.

ACCEPTED REASONS FOR SEARCHES:

Foster parent(s) are authorized to conduct searches of client(s) rooms if the following conditions exist:

- There is reasonable suspicion of drug paraphernalia present.
- There is reasonable suspicion of a dangerous weapon that could be used to endanger the client or someone else.
- There is reasonable suspicion of literature or materials present that are not age appropriate.
- The client is suspected of concealing stolen property.
- The client is suspected of having an eating disorder and concealing food in bedroom.
- Any other situation that may arise that the foster parent may feel is a potential hazard to the client.

PERSON(S) ALLOWED TO CONDUCT SEARCHES:

Foster parent(s) contracted by Alberta Professional Services who are properly trained are authorized to conduct searches of clients placed in their care. Agency qualified professionals, social workers, and their supervisors may also conduct searches

PROCEDURE FOR SEARCHES:

Prior to conducting a search the client must be given an opportunity to voluntarily relinquish the suspected item to the foster parent(s). If the client refuses, the foster parent(s) are authorized to proceed with the search for suspected items.

AREAS APPROVED FOR SEARCHES:

Foster parent(s) are authorized to search all areas of the living environment including all areas of the client's bedroom. The foster parent(s) are also authorized to request the client to pull his/her clothes pockets out or to empty the contents of his/her book bags, pocketbooks, or similar items. Neither body cavity searches nor strip searches will be conducted by foster parent(s) contracted by Alberta Professional Services.

DOCUMENTATION OF SEARCHES:

All client searches and results of searches will be documented by the foster parent(s) and submitted to their Alberta family social worker or other supervising professional to be placed in the client's record.

NOTIFICATION OF CLIENT SEARCHES:

Once a search is conducted, the foster parent(s) will notify the supervising qualified professional or their Agency family social worker and submit a copy of the search report within 48 hours of the search. For searches that result in law enforcement involvement, the supervising qualified professional or family social worker will be notified within 24 hours of the search.

The foster parent(s) or other Agency staff knowledgeable of the occurrence will inform the parents, guardian, or legal custodian of any searches no later than the time of the next family team meeting. For searches that result in law enforcement involvement, the parents, guardians, or legal custodians will be notified within 24 hours of the search by the assigned qualified professional or family social worker. Upon request a written copy of the search will be furnished to any of these concerned parties.

DISPOSAL OF SEIZED PROPERTY:

All reasonable attempts will be made to return all seized items to the rightful owner if possible. Illegal items will be turned over to the appropriate law enforcement agency or their instructions otherwise followed. All other items will be disposed of by the foster parent after receiving prior verbal approval of the assigned qualified professional or family social worker.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES:

It is Alberta's philosophy that the individuals we serve can learn to overcome even the greatest of challenges if they are placed in a safe, structured, and nurturing environment that emphasizes positive supports and interventions. Therefore, it is the responsibility of our staff and foster parents to assure that each foster care client is provided instruction and discipline appropriate for the client's age; past experiences; and developmental, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels of functioning.

Foster Parents are required to abide by the following guidelines of discipline at all times:

- No child will be subjected to cruel or abusive punishment at any time.
- No child will be subjected to corporal punishment, which includes but is not limited to hitting; spanking; slapping; physical exercise as punishment; or inappropriate, harsh, or meaningless physical labor.
- No child will be deprived of a meal or contact with family as punishment.
- No child will be placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving. The length of such "room time" when used should take into consideration the child's age, developmental level, and emotional issues.
- No child will be subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about himself/herself or any member of their family.

In addition our Agency's social workers, qualified professionals, and foster parents are expected to be familiar with any disciplinary interventions that are identified in their clients' Person Centered Plan or other individual service/treatment plan and to implement these interventions as written.

CONFIDENTIALITY PROCEDURES:

Protecting the confidentiality of information gathered or created in serving our clients is of the greatest importance in protecting their interests, gaining their trust, and complying with legal requirements. Therefore:

- (1) Agency staff shall be allowed access and control over confidential client information only as needed for providing services to clients and keeping related documentation as per professional standards. In addition to administrative staff (administrative director, client record keeping staff, and billing staff), professional staff with legitimate interests in the child's services such a clinical supervisor and the social worker responsible for supervising the client's placement shall have access to a client's record. Foster families shall be provided with that information needed to adequately understand the background and service needs of children placed in their homes.
- (2) Persons having access to confidential client records or specified information in client records shall be limited to persons authorized pursuant to law. These persons shall include the client; the birth parent or legal custodian when the client is a minor; agency staff; auditing, licensing or accrediting personnel; and those persons for whom the Agency has obtained a properly signed consent for release of information.
- (3) A consent for release of information shall be on a form which complies with the then current, established regulatory and legal guidelines and be signed by the client (or legally responsible person in the case of a minor) prior to the release of confidential client information. This consent may be amended or withdrawn at any time; however, this does not apply to information already released.
- (4) There may be certain exceptions that permit or require the release of information without prior written permission such as in emergencies in order to protect the health and safety of the client or other individuals or if otherwise confidential records are subpoenaed by a court of proper jurisdiction.
- (5) A client will not be denied access to services based on any restrictions they may place on releasing confidential information. However restricting the release of such information may in some instances naturally reduce or restrict the services that may be reasonably and effectively provided.

END OF DOCUMENT

**ALBERTA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE
CLIENT HANDBOOK**

I have received a copy of the Alberta Professional Services Therapeutic Foster Care Handbook and attachments including procedures concerning Admissions, Clients' Rights, Client Grievances, Searches, Discipline, and Confidentiality totaling 14 pages including a face page and this acknowledgement.

I have had the opportunity to review and discuss the information in this Handbook and Attachments with an Alberta staff person.

Client/Date

Parent or Legal Guardian/Date

Other/Date

Other/Date