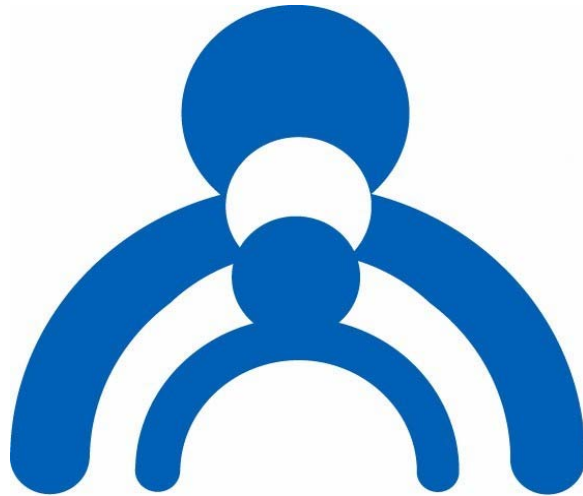


CONSUMER HANDBOOK



United for Families was formed specifically for the purpose of developing community-based services and supports for children and families served by District 15 child protection and foster care system. A core value of United for Families is the belief that all children have the right to grow up safe, healthy and fulfilled in families that love and nurture them.

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MISSION STATEMENT

To break the cycle of child abuse through a diverse network of community partners and innovative services.

VISION

Our vision is to be the recognized statewide leader providing a continuum of dynamic and innovative programs and services that result in family stability and permanency for all children and families in our four county community.

DEFINITIONS

Consent – To give permission.

Consumer – The person receiving services.

Confidentiality – Information that needs to be kept private, not discussed or shared with others in any way.

Grievance – A perceived injustice.

Service/Treatment Plan – The activities and tasks that you, your family and any Case Management Agencies agree must be done to obtain your goals.

Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

At United for Families and our subcontracted providers you are protected by certain rights and responsibilities that support the services you receive. You have the right:

To be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect without regard to race, religion, age or disability.

To understand the availability of the services you need, what services you will be using, and United for Families expectations and rules for using those services.

To receive quality service, given in a professional and timely manner.

To expect that employees working on behalf of United for Families will comply with all laws that protect you from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

To have your rights to confidentiality and privacy respected and upheld within the limits of the law, and to obtain your agreement before information is given to another agency or person outside United for Families.

To know that your record may be reviewed for quality and compliance by persons from the Council on Accreditation, Department of Children and Families staff and other monitoring agencies.

To participate in setting up and reviewing service plans, case plans and/or any other meeting between you and United for Families.

To understand rules and conditions related to United for Families discontinuing services.

To refuse service, unless the court has limited your rights, and to be informed of what will happen if you refuse.

To file a grievance and to be given a copy of the United for Families Consumer Grievance Procedure.

You have the Responsibility:

To be honest in giving information that is requested by United for Families in order to be provided services.

To comply with United for Families rules, policies and requests.

To work towards all service plan goals and any other request that has been agreed upon.

To respect the privacy/confidentiality of others receiving services.

To behave in a manner that does not threaten or endanger another person and to understand that such activity could cause United for Families to discontinue services.

Please read these Consumer Rights and Responsibilities and take this time to ask questions. When you are satisfied that you understand your rights and responsibilities, please sign the receipt form to indicate that you have received our handbook.

United for Families Rights and Responsibilities

- United for Families has the right to serve you according to the staff and programs offered and available. A waiting list will become available when people needing services exceed program capacity. United for Families may provide you with information about other agencies that offer similar services if our program capacity is full. United for Families has the right to deny services, whether short or long term, to anyone who threatens the health or well being of others or who does not meet his/her obligations to United for Families.
- United for Families offers high quality services and will schedule appointments and activities that are helpful to you. We will strive to make our services as accessible and convenient as possible.
- United for Families is responsible for protecting your privacy/confidentiality except when required by law if abuse or neglect is suspected.
- United for Families is responsible for obtaining your ideas and help in developing and carrying out your service/treatment plan.
- United for Families is responsible for hiring qualified staff.
- United for Families is responsible for providing services in safe and clean buildings.
- All United for Families staff is required by law to report suspicion of child abuse or elder abuse.
- If United for Families staff consider someone receiving services as an immediate danger to himself/herself or others, the staff member must:
 - Consult with mental health professionals and, in some incidences, call 911 for crisis intervention;
 - Determine if involuntary hospitalization is needed;
 - If possible, notify the individual who is believed to be in immediate danger or their family that the consumer may be a danger to himself/herself;
 - Notify the appropriate law enforcement personnel, unless in the judgment of the staff member and their supervisor, the situation has been resolved without such notification;
 - Disclose information needed to resolve the dangerous situation; and
 - Document the situation as an incident.

Civil Rights

The agency and its contracted providers of client services will provide to all persons with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills, and those persons with limited proficiency in the English language, appropriate assistance that is necessary to afford such persons equal opportunity to access and benefit from the services and programs administered by the agency.

Auxiliary aids for clients with sensory impairment may include:

- Amplified telephones and other assistive listening devices and systems;
- TDD/TTY – Text telephone used like a typewriter that can be used by people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired;
- Florida Relay Service (FRS) – A service which enables a hearing person to communicate with a person who is hearing or speech impaired through a specially trained operator called a communications assistant;
- Braille, Large Print, Audio-Tapes and Computer Disks; and
- Qualified American sign language interpreters, note takers, and readers.

Assistance for persons with limited proficiency in English may include:

- Hiring bilingual staff
- Hiring staff interpreters
- Using volunteer staff interpreters
- Arranging volunteer community interpreters
- Contracting outside interpreter-services
- Telephone interpreter services such as the AT&T Language Line

All qualified clients and/or potential clients are entitled to equal opportunity to use and benefit from the programs and services of the agency. This includes reasonable accommodations to ensure that programs and services of the agency are equally accessible to and equally effective for otherwise qualified persons who have hearing, vision or mobility impairments, or who are limited in their ability to speak, write, read or otherwise understand English.

Auxiliary aids will be available for use by clients, potential clients, and employees with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills, or limited English proficiency in each phase of the service delivery or employment process when the lack of such aids may in effect deny or delay service accessibility, hinder service effectiveness or deny persons with disabilities reasonable accommodations to ensure nondiscrimination and equal opportunity.

Purpose: This plan provides United for Families with guidelines as follows:

- All clients for services with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills, have equal opportunity to use and benefit from the programs and services administered by the agency.
- Qualified persons, due to their limited ability to speak, read, write, or otherwise understand English language, are not excluded from or denied equal access to the services and programs administered by the agency.
- Reasonable accommodation(s), as needed, are made available to the above clients to ensure that they are not denied full participation in the programs and services of the agency.

Scope: The policies and procedures described in this plan apply to all United for Families' offices and also providers who provide direct services at our service centers to clients or potential clients with impaired sensory (hearing and vision), manual or speaking skills, and those with limited proficiency in English.

Procedures: The following procedures are to be followed by agency and network providers of direct client services in providing auxiliary aids.

- Client needs are assessed through consulting with the client/potential client concerning his/her preferred communication mode, and if applicable, with the assigned caseworker, counselor, parent or other family member, guardian or other representative and the auxiliary aids/hearing impaired coordinator. (NOTE: Hearing impaired clients or those clients with limited proficiency in English language have a right to a qualified interpreter. The use of family or friends as interpreters is highly discouraged except in an emergency, as it could result in a breach of confidentiality or reluctance on the part of beneficiaries to reveal personal information critical to their situations to family and friends.)

- It is the responsibility of all supervisors/directors for each program to ensure that appropriate auxiliary aids are provided for the client. When obtaining auxiliary aids, every effort should be made to utilize the agency's current resources. However, if auxiliary aids need to be obtained from outside the agency, the supervisor/director shall contact the United for Families Finance Department.
- Certain auxiliary aids are not always readily available, particularly in rural areas. This problem is compounded when advance notice cannot be anticipated which is often the case for child protective services cases and walk-ins. To help alleviate this problem, each major service center will have staff available to provide assistance.
- The staff are either reasonably skilled in basic sign language and finger spelling or are knowledgeable of the existing resources available in the community, including qualified interpreters from the Deaf Service Centers. Auxiliary aids shall be provided in a time frame that will not unreasonably delay, impede or deny services to clients. This will also include other languages.
- During the initial needs assessment, clients must be informed of the available auxiliary aids, and that the agency will provide these services at no cost to them. The clients' wishes and needs for auxiliary aids should be taken into consideration before deciding on the appropriate auxiliary aids.
- Posters containing information about the availability of auxiliary aids are posted in all service centers.
- When meetings, conferences, or seminars are scheduled, information will be included in the advertisement, conference registration materials or meeting notices that participants with mobility or sensory impairments will be provided with necessary auxiliary aids at no cost to themselves. The information will include the name of a contact person and a date by which the participant must request such assistance. The registration process should include a method for determining the number and type of participants with disabilities needing assistance as well as the type assistance/accommodation requested. Provisions may include but are not limited to qualified interpreters, readers, adequate lighting, handicapped parking spaces, appropriate entrance ramps, appropriate seating arrangements and accessible restrooms for the mobility impaired.

Training: The United for Families training program includes the various communication options available for auxiliary aids; how to access and utilize these aids; and the responsibility of the agency to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure training is accessible.

Dissemination: A copy of this plan will be posted on the agency's Internet website and internal Intranet for all employees to view.

Revisions: This plan will be updated as needed but at least annually.

Consumers who believe that they have been discriminated against may file a written complaint of discrimination within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act with:

Assistant Staff Director for Civil Rights
 DCF Office of Inspector General
 Office of Civil Rights
 1317 Winewood Boulevard
 Building 5, 2nd Floor
 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700
 (850) 487-1901; TDD (850) 922-9230

United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 Attention: Office of Civil Rights
 Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 3B70
 61 Forsyth Street, S. W.
 Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8909
 (404) 562-7881; TDD (404) 331-2867

Confidentiality of Client Information

All information regarding past, present and future clients and/or their relatives is considered to be confidential and is covered by these procedures.

Need-to-Know Basis

1. Information is shared among staff, agencies, and foster parents only on a need-to-know basis. Under no circumstances will a staff member share information about past, present and future clients outside his/her responsibilities and duties as a staff member working on a specific case. If approached by an individual seeking information outside these parameters, the staff member will decline to offer information and direct the individual to the appropriate agency staff.
2. Staff will practice extreme diligence in sharing information only in staff secure areas. Staff will not discuss clients in common areas of the facility where members of the public may hear such information.
3. Volunteers who work with the agency are also subject to the need-to-know rule. Staff members who oversee the work of volunteers will share minimal information with volunteers about specific clients, sharing information only to the extent that it impacts the scope of the volunteer's work with the client. For example, a volunteer who tutors a child may be told that the child is experiencing difficulty in school performance, but the same volunteer is not to be told personal information about the client, his family, the status of the case, or the problems that brought the family under the supervision of the agency.
4. Staff will continue to caution foster parents to share only need-to-know information with other foster parents.
5. All agency staff, providers, volunteers and caregivers will receive appropriate training on confidentiality and ethical standards.

Access to Records

1. At no time is information regarding clients and/or relatives and/or other relations to be released to any person without prior written consent of the client, or in the event of a minor child, his/her parent or legal guardian, or under subpoena of the judicial system.

2. At no time are there to be public appearances by children involving publicity or fundraising without written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian. All such appearances are strictly voluntary.
3. Photographs will not be taken of children without written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian. (Exceptions are the required photographs for identification purposes.)
4. All client records will be handled in a manner which will protect the nature of the information contained within them. When the offices are closed, all client records will be kept in locked centralized file rooms.
5. All automated records meet standards for security to ensure all users see only the information appropriate for their needs.
6. All records regarding clients are considered the property of the agency.

Special Requirements Related to HIV/AIDS Records

The following procedures apply to HIV/AIDS records and information access:

1. Case narrative will not contain any reference to the child's HIV infection or AIDS.
2. United for Families and the placement provider will disclose to adopting or substitute care parents the medical condition, but not the name, of an HIV/AIDS positive child prior to the decision to adopt or accept the child into the substitute care home. Only after the parents have made the commitment to adopt or accept the child into the home will the name of the child be provided.
3. The substitute care parents will be provided with documentation of the complete medical history and condition of a child placed in their care, including HIV/AIDS status. This documentation must be maintained by the substitute care parents and held as confidential information with access strictly limited to the child's physician(s) and other providers of medical and dental care when treatment is required.
4. Medical documentation needed for school enrollment, day care or similar purpose must be provided separately by the physician and may not contain any reference to the child's HIV/AIDS status.

5. With the exception of the child's medical records provided to substitute care parents (and to the child's natural parents or other legal guardian), case material which discloses that the child has HIV/AIDS will be kept within the file in a "Confidential Information" envelope used to safeguard sensitive case information.
6. The child's case records will not be segregated or flagged in any way which would permit their identification as case records of HIV/AIDS infected children.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

Notice of Privacy Policy

United for Families adheres to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). On the basis of that law, privacy regulations now apply to certain Protected Health Information (PHI). PHI refers to individually identifiable health information created or received by a healthcare provider, health plan, or healthcare clearinghouse that relates to the past, present, or future health of an individual; the provision of health care to an individual; or the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care. United for Families will comply with all other federal and state laws concerning medical privacy. Such health information includes health status, medical condition, claims experience, receipt of health care, medical history, genetic information, and evidence of insurability and disability.

Consumer Grievance Procedure

It is the policy of United for Families to respond to all grievance and appeals in a manner that is respectful of individual clients, providers, and others who file a grievance. This policy is included in all contracts with service providers. The grievance and appeals process promotes fair, non-intimidating, and timely resolution.

Grievance and Appeals Processes for Parents

case manager will explain the grievance and appeals process to the child and family at the initial contact. Grievance and appeals forms are included in the consumer guide that will be provided at initial contact.

The following procedure will be followed when a child/youth or a parent files a grievance:

1. In the event that a difference of opinion or conflict occurs, the dissatisfied person(s) is encouraged to bring the specific issue to the attention of the Case Manager in the context of an inquiry. The forum for this dialog is informal and the results are documented in the appropriate file. Documentation includes the circumstances surrounding the issue and resolution/status.
2. If the concerns are not resolved at the inquiry or complaint level, the case manager will provide the person(s) with the name of his/her supervisor so that the person(s) may speak with them regarding the concern/complaint. This process should move up the chain of command within the case management agency until the issue is resolved.
3. If the management personnel within the case management agency can not resolve the issue, the case management agency shall request a meeting with United for Families management and the complainant to discuss the outstanding issue.
4. Final authority to resolve disagreements, if necessary, rests with the United for Families Chief Executive Officer. If needed, all data collected will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer for final review. The agency designee will notify the person(s) served of the final decision which will be given no later than five (5) days after the Chief Executive Officer receives the request for review.

Grievances and Appeals Processes for Case Managers Agencies or Providers

All United for Families contracts for services require providers to follow United for Families grievance and appeals procedures. If a contract provider wishes to file a grievance, a summary of the process is outlined below.

1. In the event that a difference of opinion or conflict occurs, the dissatisfied provider is encouraged to bring the specific issue to the attention of United for Families in the context of an inquiry. The United for Families Quality Management department processes all inquiries and provides the response.
2. If the United for Families Quality Management department can not resolve the issue, a meeting with United for Families management and the provider will be set to discuss the issue.
3. If the United for Families management team and the provider can not resolve the issue, a meeting with the United for Families Chief Executive Officer will be set for final resolution.
4. Final authority to resolve disagreements, if necessary, rests with the United for Families Chief Executive Officer. If needed, all data collected will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer for final review. The agency designee will notify the provider of the final decision which will be given no later than five (5) days after the Chief Executive Officer receives the request for review.

Review of all Complaints and Grievances

On a quarterly basis, the United for Families Quality Management Director reviews all complaints and grievances filed within the quarter. Results are reviewed with the United for Families Senior Management Team. Timeliness of resolution, corrective actions taken, and customer satisfaction with the resolution is evaluated.



UNITED FOR FAMILIES

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