

CareCertify LLC

Foster Care Training Series

FC-10

Documentation & Working With the Team

Participant Guide

Foster Care Training Series · Audience: Foster Parents · Agency Staff · Treatment Foster Care Providers · CE Hours: 1.0

You See the Child Every Day

Foster care is a team effort centered on a child, and you're the team member who sees the child every day. That makes your observations, documentation, and communication essential — they connect daily life in your home to the case plan, the caseworker, the providers, and the court that shape a child's future.

This guide covers what to document, how to do it well, and how to work with the team and the court. Good records and collaboration keep the child at the center of every decision.

Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Explain why documentation matters in foster care
- Identify what foster parents should document
- Keep objective, accurate records
- Work within the case plan and the team
- Advocate for the child and protect confidentiality

Section 1: Why Documentation Matters in Foster Care

Documentation records a child's daily life — their behavior, health, school, visits, progress, and needs. Because you see the child every day, your observations and records are vital: they inform the case plan, keep the team coordinated, and help the court make decisions in the child's best interest. Good documentation connects daily life in your home to the bigger decisions about a child's future.

Section 2: What Foster Parents Document

Document the things that show how a child is doing and that the team needs to know: behavior and wellbeing (mood, milestones, concerns), health (appointments, medications, illnesses, injuries), school and activities, family visits and how the child does before and after, and any incidents. Follow your agency's documentation requirements and keep records current. These records tell the story of a child's time in your care.

Section 3: Objective, Accurate Record-Keeping

Keep records objective: describe what you observed rather than opinions, labels, or judgments, and attribute the child's statements ('child said...'). Be accurate, specific, and timely — note facts and dates rather than relying on distant memory. Remember that records can be read by the caseworker, court, and others, so write them carefully, fairly, and honestly.

Section 4: The Case Plan and the Team

Each child has a case plan that sets goals toward permanency and wellbeing — including reunification efforts, services, visits, and the child's needs. Your daily care supports the plan, and you follow it and report progress and concerns. The team includes the caseworker, providers, the birth family, the guardian ad litem, and the court. Everyone works the same plan toward the child's best interest.

Section 5: Working With Caseworkers, Families, and the Court

Work closely with the caseworker — your main partner — communicating openly and promptly about the child. Support visits and the birth-family relationship per the case plan, treating the family with respect. Share your observations and raise concerns, and participate in meetings and (when asked) court. Ask for help and resources when you need them. Good collaboration keeps everyone aligned on the child's best interest.

Section 6: Supporting the Court Process

The court oversees a child's case and makes key decisions about safety and permanency. Foster parents often provide information to the court — through the caseworker or directly — and may attend hearings or reviews. Your honest, objective observations about how the child is doing are valuable input for decisions made in the child's best interest. Support the process and respect the rights of the child, the family, and everyone involved.

Section 7: Confidentiality

A foster child's records and information are confidential. Share only with the team as needed for the child's care and per policy, and never discuss the case with friends, neighbors, or on social media. Protect documents and devices. Confidentiality protects the child's safety, privacy, and dignity, and it applies to the records you create as much as to conversations.

Section 8: Advocating for the Child

You know the child better than almost anyone on the team, which makes you a powerful advocate. Use your daily knowledge to advocate for the child's needs — raising concerns, pushing for needed services and supports, and speaking up in meetings and court. Keep the child at the center of every decision. Combined with good documentation and collaboration, your advocacy helps move a child toward safety, permanency, and wellbeing.

You're the child's champion

No one sees the child like you do. Document well, collaborate, and advocate — your voice helps shape a child's future.

Key Terms

Term	What it means
Documentation	Records of a child's daily life, health, behavior, and needs.
Case plan	The plan of goals and services toward permanency and wellbeing.

Objective record-keeping	Describing what you observed, not opinions or labels.
Guardian ad litem	The child's court-appointed advocate.
Best interest	The standard guiding decisions about a child.
Confidentiality	Keeping a foster child's information private and protected.

Check Your Understanding

1. Why does your documentation matter so much?
2. Name three things foster parents document.
3. What makes documentation objective?
4. Who is on the team, and how do you work with them?
5. How do you advocate for a child?

What's Next

Looking ahead

This completes the Foster & Treatment Foster Care course. Keep each lesson's completion record with your license file, and pair these with your agency's required training and reviews.