

To: Whom This May Concern

From: Deborah Lane, Licensed Kansas Foster Parent

Re: Foster Parent and Foster Child Bill of Rights

Date: 3/11/2022

Dear Sirs and Madams of the Kansas Legislature,

As a veteran foster parent, I have recently found out that there is a Foster Parents and Foster Child Bill of Rights. This is not something taught in MAPP Class and should be included in ALL foster care curriculum trainings going forth.

I have experienced in my tenure as a foster parent, licensed foster home that not only have my rights been violated, but also the rights of the children in which I serve.

I am a licensed home for Restoration Family Services in Wichita, KS. This is a stellar agency; I fully admire the administration and staff because they will not only tell you everything, they know about a potential placement but will also encourage the governing agency worker to call with any additional information or to answer any questions that we as foster parents may have.

Unfortunately, this has not been the experience I have had with St. Francis or Eckerd. After my MAPP training, I went to Eckerd Agency where in the beginning everything was okay, then they began concealing things about foster children, and the potential danger they can cause. I had a foster child cut another with a piece of glass she found outside because she “wanted to see her bleed to death”. When the situation was reported, and I filed for immediate disruption, I was told I could not do that. However, the child was screened in at St Joseph and placed in a facility. Another time, I had a little girl who was placed with me then taken because they felt she would be “better off” in a bi-racial home since the child was bi-racial. My next example was in 2019 when I was scheduled for a surgery out of state, and I had notified Eckerd 3 months in advance of the surgery schedule, and I would need respite for about a week. They did not accommodate but asked if I could reschedule. I ended up with an immediate disruption of that child who was thriving in my home and had even gone as far as to get an after-school job and open an account of her own. My final example was when they asked me to do a respite and then took months to pay. I had to contact DCF to file a complaint to get the

compensation I had earned and then they decided I wasn't a 'good fit' for them any longer. But they also notified other agencies to not take me on as a foster parent.

My next examples are from St Francis Ministries here in Wichita, KS. I had a St Francis child from the time she was 4 months old, in January 2020 and she went home in March for about 6 weeks and then came back to me in May 2020 where she remained until August 2021. On the day of the termination hearing, I called SFM and spoke to Tate Strasner, FSW and inquired of the outcome of the proceedings. He was told to tell me that I had to call the bio parents for that information, they couldn't disclose it to me but disclosed it to the bio aunt. I then requested on multiple occasions for an adoption packet, and they constantly and consistently told me that the application was in the mail. I had to hire an attorney to be able to receive an application. But before that, they informed the bio aunt that she would get the children and they would pay her to keep them. I feel I was discriminated when it came to this child, and her sister. I felt that I was good enough to SFM to be a "Mammy", but not a "Mommy" to these children. I went into a BIS hearing with the odds stacked greatly against me, although the bio aunt had several DCF reports made against her and actually refused DCF and WPD entry into her home for a welfare check due to her hoarding and the 10 plus cats that live there, and the baby is allergic to cats, SFM knows this but still allows the children to be in an unsafe environment so they can meet their numbers.

Another situation that is not done, is that the governing agencies, especially SFM, will not fully disclose all the issues known about a foster child, and at times it puts the accepting families in danger, and there have been assaults to foster parents by foster children. They will submit a referral for a child, but that referral may be as much as a year old from my experience. And they will tell you there's no updated information, but if you are the governing agency... who'd monitoring this child's progress?

Finally... SFM has enacted new policies which directly violate the rights of foster parents and children. First: if a child is brought to a home, and is refusing placement, SFM is still leaving the child. I had a placement in September of 2021 who very vocally stated she did not want to be in a black house, and eat black food and was refusing to come in. The worker picked the child up and left her in my home anyway, and that resulted in me being investigated because the child said I was abusing her and her sister. Not only were my rights violated, because I was told I had to keep the children, but their rights were violated as well. Second: SFM

has now stated that if a foster home takes a respite, (new to care) or emergency placement, the foster family is now responsible to transport that child or children to their next destination, regardless of where it is. They, SFM will no longer be transporting ER placement kids once they have been dropped off. This is unfair to the foster family, especially if they must work to provide for their own family, and this child is in Wichita and must be transported to another county/city. Since this has been done, I know of several homes who have either dropped their licensing or stopped taking emergency or PPC (police protective custody) placements. This increases the shortage of homes for these children who are then literally forced to ride around all night with on call workers because they can't take them to the office.

It would help immensely if the workers would answer the phones when children are in crisis. Especially when the referral does not state that these kids have psychiatric needs but show up with a bag full of psychotropic meds.

Lastly: SFM because of favoritism, should not be conducting Best Interest Staffing when it comes to adoption. This should be turned back over into the unbiased hands of DCF, or an independent panel. They, SFM always favor the bio families, which is almost not always the best interest option for these children in care. In the spirit and memory of Journee Bland, Lucas Hernandez, and Evan Brewer, we as a people, have got to do better.

Thank you,

Deborah Lane