

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to foster parents; creating s.  
 3           39.4087, F.S.; providing a short title; providing  
 4           legislative intent; creating a bill of rights for  
 5           foster parents; providing for mediation; requiring the  
 6           Department of Children and Families to adopt rules;  
 7           providing an effective date.  
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9   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 11           Section 1.   Section 39.4087, Florida Statutes, is created  
 12           to read:

13           39.4087 Bill of rights for foster parents.-

14           (1)   SHORT TITLE.-This act may be cited as the "Foster  
 15           Parent Bill of Rights."

16           (2)   LEGISLATIVE INTENT.-The Legislature finds that foster  
 17           parents providing care for children who are in the custody of  
 18           the Department of Children and Families play an integral,  
 19           indispensable, and vital role in the state's effort to care for  
 20           dependent children displaced from their homes. The Legislature  
 21           further finds that it is in the best interest of the state's  
 22           child welfare system to acknowledge foster parents as active and  
 23           participating members of this system and to support them through  
 24           a bill of rights for foster parents who care for children in the  
 25           custody of the department through direct approval and placement

26 | by the department.

27 | (3) BILL OF RIGHTS.—To the extent not otherwise prohibited  
28 | by general law, the department shall implement each of the  
29 | following policies. With respect to the placement of any foster  
30 | child with a foster parent that is contracted directly with the  
31 | department, or through an agency that contracts with the  
32 | department to place children in foster care:

33 | (a) The department shall treat a foster parent with  
34 | dignity, respect, and trust, and shall consider a foster parent  
35 | as a member of the professional team caring for foster children.

36 | (b) The department shall provide a foster parent with a  
37 | clear explanation and understanding of the role of the  
38 | department and the role of the members of the child's birth  
39 | family.

40 | (c) A foster parent may continue his or her own family  
41 | values and routines.

42 | (d) A foster parent shall be provided training and support  
43 | for the purposes of improving skills in providing daily care,  
44 | meeting the special needs of the child in foster care, and  
45 | having a better understanding of the rights and responsibilities  
46 | of the foster parent.

47 | (e) Before the placement of a child in foster care, the  
48 | department shall inform the foster parent of issues relative to  
49 | the child that may jeopardize the health and safety of the  
50 | foster family or alter the manner in which foster care should be

51 administered.

52 (f) The department shall fully disclose to the foster  
53 parent any information regarding past or pending charges of  
54 delinquency as a juvenile; criminal charges, if charged as an  
55 adult; and previous hospitalizations, whether due to mental or  
56 physical issues, of the foster child.

57 (g) The department shall provide a means by which the  
58 foster parent can contact the department 24 hours a day, 7 days  
59 a week for the purpose of receiving assistance.

60 (h) The department shall provide the foster parent timely  
61 and adequate financial reimbursement.

62 (i) The department shall provide a clear, written  
63 explanation of the plan concerning the placement of a child in  
64 the foster parent's home. For emergency placements, the  
65 department shall provide such explanation as soon as reasonably  
66 possible.

67 (j) Before placement in a foster home, unless there is the  
68 need for an emergency placement, the department shall allow the  
69 foster parent to review written information concerning the child  
70 and allow the foster parent to assist in determining if the  
71 prospective foster family is the proper placement for the child.

72 (k) The department shall allow the foster parent to refuse  
73 placement in his or her home, or to request, upon reasonable  
74 notice to the department, the removal of a child from his or her  
75 home for good reason, without threat of reprisal, unless

76 otherwise stipulated by contract or policy.

77 (l) The department shall inform a foster parent of  
78 decisions made by the court or the licensed child-placing agency  
79 concerning the child.

80 (m) The department shall allow the foster parent to  
81 communicate with any person who works directly with the foster  
82 child, such as therapists, physicians, and teachers, with  
83 written consent of the person.

84 (n) Unless otherwise prohibited by law, a foster parent  
85 has the right to full disclosure of all medical, psychological,  
86 and behavioral issues of the child in his or her care. The  
87 department shall provide all information regarding the child and  
88 the child's family background and health history in a timely  
89 manner to the foster parent.

90 (o) The department shall provide timely written  
91 notification of changes to the case plan or termination of the  
92 placement, and the reasons for the changes or termination of  
93 placement.

94 (p) The department shall notify the foster parent of all  
95 court hearings and any meeting pertaining to the child in his or  
96 her care at least 7 days before such hearing or meeting. The  
97 foster parent is permitted to attend such hearings or meetings  
98 at the discretion of the court.

99 (q) The department shall provide, upon request by the  
100 foster parent, information regarding the child's progress after

101 a child leaves foster care, to the extent the department is in  
102 possession of such information at the time of the request.

103 (r) The department shall take into consideration whether a  
104 foster family is an appropriate permanent placement for the  
105 child, if the child has been in the foster family's care for 12  
106 months or longer.

107 (s) The department shall consider a former foster family  
108 as a placement option when a foster child re-enters foster care.

109 (t) A foster parent may take a period of respite where the  
110 department may not place foster children within the home upon  
111 reasonable notice to the department.

112 (u) A foster parent may submit factually-based written  
113 statements relevant to the case to the court, as provided by  
114 law.

115 (4) MEDIATION.—The department shall provide a foster  
116 parent with information regarding the department's mediation  
117 policy. A foster parent may file for mediation upon a violation  
118 of this section.

119 (5) RULES.—The department shall adopt rules to implement  
120 this section.

121 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2019.