



# THE GRODEN CENTER, INC.

## Professional Family Living Arrangement (PFLA)

*A therapeutic foster care program with a mission to keep children and adolescents in a less-restrictive home setting while working to achieve an individual's full potential.*

### FACT SHEET



## Our Mission

Many children and adolescents are unable to live in their own homes for a variety of reasons including behavioral problems, neglect, and/or abuse. Others have been living in residential facilities for a period of time, separated from their families and communities. When appropriate, being part of a specialized foster family allows each child/adolescent the opportunities for typical experiences in a safe and nurturing home with trained professional parents.

Professional Family Living Arrangement (PFLA) is a therapeutic foster care program with a mission to keep children and adolescents in a less-restrictive home setting while working to achieve an individual's full potential. Established in 1993, PFLA provides a broad range of individualized services to meet the needs of the child/adolescent with challenging emotional and behavioral issues. Its goal is to develop family relationships, independent living skills, and community connections. PFLA also works on the plan toward permanency, preparing a child/adolescent for adoption or to be reunified with his or her family.

## Range of Services

The PFLA program provides the following individualized services through a team of professionals including psychologists, master's level clinicians, PFLA providers (foster parents), and respite providers:

- Interdisciplinary treatment planning that includes the PFLA team, the child/adolescent and family, the referring agency, and other involved community providers
- Clinical case management and behavioral programming
- Coordination with the individual's educational program
- PFLA provider training
- Respite care
- Family visitation and training that emphasizes a "parent to parent" model
- Permanency planning
- Professional support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## Referral Process

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) can make a referral to PFLA to place a child or adolescent in a specialized foster home. Through a screening process, a team of professionals determines that a child is appropriate to live with a family. The child/adolescent and a licensed PFLA home are carefully matched to ensure a successful placement. A gradual transition process is planned by the team with several visits and eventual placement in the PFLA home.

The following diagnostic criteria are used as a guide for placement: children/adolescents ages 3 to 21, Developmental Disabilities, Conduct Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, or dually diagnosed mental health and cognitive disorders.

## Some Frequently Asked Questions About the Professional Family Living Arrangement

### Does PFLA deal with a specific age group or diagnosis?

The PFLA program provides home-based residential care to children and youth up to 21 years of age with varying degrees of emotional and/or developmental disabilities who are either unable to continue living at home or not ready to return home following a more restrictive placement (e.g., residential facilities, hospitals). Typical diagnoses include Mental Retardation, Autism, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

### What is the licensing process for potential foster families?

It is a 6-8 week process to get licensed through the Department of Children, Youth and Families for the PFLA program. Licensing includes obtaining clearances for: DCYF, criminal background checks,



## Frequently Asked Questions

*continued*

driving, and a physician. Fingerprinting and personal/professional references are required, and an application and home study are completed as well.

### **How long could we expect to wait for a child after training is completed?**

Because the referral and matching process is conducted on a case-by-case basis, you could wait anytime from a couple of weeks to a few months before a child is placed in your home. After a potential match is identified, a gradual transition process is begun with visits and eventual placement in the PFLA providers' home.

### **Would we get a child of a preferred gender? Age?**

Yes, you have the final decision on whether or not a specific child is placed in your home. The PFLA program does try to place a child of a preferred gender and age whenever possible, but it is dependent on what children are referred to the program.

### **What happens if the child does not like his/her foster parents after an extended period of time?**

If for any reason the placement seems unsuccessful, a meeting would be held with the PFLA team, a representative from DCYF, the provider and child to determine whether or not the placement continues to be appropriate and, if needed, additional supports would be put in place to maintain the placement.

### **Can a foster child be taken out of state for an overnight stay? How much time is needed for notification?**

Yes, a child can be taken out of state for an overnight stay. Generally, the guardian of the child has to sign a consent form before an out-of-state trip, so at least a week's notice is appropriate.

### **How is medical coverage handled for a foster child?**

All of the foster child's medical needs are covered either through the biological parent's medical insurance, Neighborhood Health Plan, Medicaid or a combination of these.

### **Does PFLA pay for additional tutoring, music lessons, etc. for foster children?**

Yes, each child/adolescent is given a budget for respite services, but these funds may also be used to pay for activities such as tutoring, music lessons, memberships, special equipment.

### **Do we have to make detailed reports/records of child behavior?**

Yes, providers must keep track of their foster child's activities and progress toward treatment plan goals to be reported on a monthly Program Service Summary form. There are additional forms to be filled out for medical appointments, medication administration, and to report any problematic behaviors or incidents.

### **What role does the Department of Children, Youth and Families play in the PFLA program?**

The Department of Children, Youth and Families refers children to the PFLA program and is the funding agent for the placement. Each child is assigned to a DCYF case worker who monitors the placement and progress towards goals. If parental rights have been terminated, DCYF is the legal guardian and the DCYF Regional Director must sign releases and consent forms, etc. If the child's biological parents or family is still involved, DCYF monitors communication and arranges visitation with them.

### **What if the biological parents show up unannounced or see the child in the community?**

If a biological parent wants to have contact, he or she must contact the Department of Children, Youth and Families to set up an approved visitation schedule.