

# PARENT HANDBOOK

Your guide to understanding  
the Child Welfare System



**Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties**



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# WELCOME TO EMBRACE FAMILIES



Dear Parent,

The Florida Department of Children and Families (hereafter referred to as the Department), contracts with Embrace Families to oversee child welfare related services in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.

Embrace Families works in partnership with agencies or programs that provide case management, behavioral/mental health, medical, educational, child care, substance abuse, domestic violence or other social services to create the variety and quality of services that are needed by families in this community. We will work with you to identify your family's unique strengths and supports, so that together we can create a "service" or "case plan" that will resolve the safety concerns that brought your family to the attention of the child welfare system. Once your case plan is negotiated, we will monitor progress closely; ensure that services your family needs are accessible; encourage and support you in completing the identified tasks; and communicate with you regularly and in a manner that is fair, honest, consistent and courteous. We expect that you will hold us accountable for doing our part in ensuring your family's involvement. We also expect that, if challenges occur, you will bring this to our attention so that we can respond quickly.

If your child has been placed outside of your home, it is imperative that we begin immediately to take the actions necessary that will allow your child to return home as soon as the child's safety can be ensured. If your child remains in your care, it is important that actions are taken which continue to reduce the safety concerns identified and allow the child to safely remain in your care. Your Case Manager will provide you with more information about federal and state laws that require permanency to be achieved in a time frame consistent with the child's development and sense of time.

We are sincerely committed to strengthening families, building upon existing natural supports, and providing effective, efficient and quality services. This booklet will answer many of your questions about what we do and how we do it. It also provides more details about what we will need from you so that we can successfully work together. Please read and discuss any questions you have with your Case Manager.

In conclusion, we say, "**Welcome to Embrace Families!**" We look forward to working with you for the benefit of your children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glen Casel".

Glen Casel  
President & CEO  
Embrace Families

# EMBRACE FAMILIES LOCATIONS

*NOTE: Your Case Manager has identified the service center to which your family is assigned by checking the box next to the location below. In addition, the case management agency and the program director have been identified. The identified location is where your Case Manager is located and where your services are coordinated.*

## **Administrative Support Center**

4001 Pelee Street, Orlando, FL 32817  
321.441.2060

### **Orange County**

#### **West Service Center**

5749 Westgate Drive, Ste. 200, Orlando, FL 32835  
321.441.1567

Embrace Families Executive Director: Nicola Bailey

- Devereux Florida, Amanda Dawson, Agency Program Director
- One Hope United, Tonia Bowman, Agency Director of Programs

### **Orange County**

#### **East Service Center**

1900 Alafaya Trail, Ste. 900, Orlando, FL 32826  
321.207.8200

Embrace Families Executive Director: Nicola Bailey

- Children's Home Society, Yvonne Rose, Agency Program Director

### **Osceola County**

#### **Service Center**

111 E. Monument Ave., Ste. 501, Kissimmee, FL 34741  
321.442.8487

Embrace Families Executive Director: Katria Jenkins

- Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, Walter Blake, Agency Program Director

### **Seminole County**

#### **Service Center**

2921 S. Orlando Ave, Ste. 150, Sanford, FL 32773  
407.688.9650

Embrace Families Executive Director: Karlene Cole-Palmer

- Children's Home Society, Catherine Baez, Agency Program Director

## OUR VISION

We envision a community that embraces vulnerable children and families with support – so that every child has a safe, stable, loving home and a path to a bright future.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of Embrace Families Community Based Care is to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children formally in the child welfare system through foster care, adoption, family reunification and prevention services.

To achieve this, Embrace Families is committed to the following values:

*We value a family, youth and individual model of practice that recognizes the assets, culture and voice of all, empowering them to reach their unique goals.*

- The child is our client.
- The safety and well-being of children will be the foremost concern at all times.
- The family is the principal resource we will work with to meet the child's needs.
- Permanency issues will be resolved in accordance with a child's sense of time.
- Services will be provided by community-based providers who are equipped to manage and deliver needed services and supports to meet the needs of children who are victims of, or at risk of, child abuse and neglect, and their families.

*We value meaningful and healthy collaboration among our colleagues, partners, stakeholders, and the community. We believe the best solutions originate from diverse talents, temperaments and life experiences.*

*We value innovation, embracing change and visionary ideas. We believe in pursuing opportunities through prudent risk-taking, developing assets and creating new solutions.*

*We value integrity and honor our commitments by not compromising our ethics and moral principles. We speak the truth, keep our promises and take responsibility for our actions.*

*We value accountability and serve as good stewards of all assets entrusted to our organization. We believe in sharing information with ongoing communication and complete transparency.*

- Resources will be efficiently managed to achieve better outcomes for children with the ultimate goals being child safety, well-being, and permanency within a twelve-month time frame.
- Financial support will be available from diverse federal, state and local sources and flexibly managed at the local level to meet child and family needs in a timely and appropriate manner.
- The system will collect and use data to accurately forecast what services and supports are needed, at what level of intensity and duration, and at what cost to achieve desired outcomes for each child and family in need.

*We value inclusiveness and believe our organization is strengthened by mutual respect for all points of view.*

# WHAT TO EXPECT AS A CLIENT OF CASE MANAGEMENT: OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE VALUES

*We believe in providing good customer service and you are our customer. As an agency we have **seven service values** that are core to our mission, which we refer to as our values of **RESPECT**. They are as follows:*

You can expect us to be **RESPONSIVE** in writing and speaking. Messages and emails should be answered within 24 business hours. We will listen to you and ask a lot of questions in an effort to get to know you and understand your family circumstances. We need this information to complete a thorough assessment in order to identify the right services for you and your child(ren). We will work with you to determine what services are in fact right for you and your family. This may require your participation in further evaluations, such as a mental health or substance abuse evaluation. If challenges arise, we will work collaboratively to find a solution.

You can expect us to be **EMPOWERED** and for us to help you feel empowered. We will not let bureaucratic red tape get in the way of providing needed services for you or your children. We expect that you will receive quality service as part of everything we do, every day. We will ask what you think needs to happen. Your opinion is valued. We may not always agree, but we should listen to one another. There may have to be difficult conversations about what needs to happen moving forward, but we will have those conversations with you. Decision-making should be transparent and you should be at the table. It is our job to help you identify the tools needed to be successful, and to make the needed changes that sustain you for a lifetime.

You can expect us to be **SUPPORTIVE**. Your case manager will assist you in accessing identified services and will keep you apprised of your child's situation. We will involve you in the care of your children. You should be involved in their medical appointments and life decisions, such as prescription medications. The prescribers of psychotropic medications will take your opinion and wishes into consideration. We will make every effort to keep your children together in placement settings and, if they are separated, we will arrange for them to see one another on a regular basis.

You can expect us to be **PROFESSIONAL**. The integrity of our organization is reflected through our individual behavior. You will be made aware of events that require your participation in a timely manner. For example, you should be invited to your Family Services Team (FST) meeting well in advance so that you can make arrangements to participate. You should be notified about things that occur involving your child(ren): such as when they are injured, ill, or change their placement. We will arrange visitation for you with your children unless the court has determined that it is not in the child's best interest to have this contact. You should be told about changes in visitation plans in time to make arrangements.

You can expect us to be **ENGAGED**. We give and receive feedback to ensure continuous improvement. We are accountable. There is a feedback process and chain of command for you to reach out to if you feel you are not receiving good customer service. Should challenges arise, please reference the list of contacts on page 4.

You can expect us to be **COURTEOUS**. We should always be respectful of you. You should have an expectation of confidentiality. You should not feel judged by anyone in our system of care. We understand that bad things happen to people that may affect them, but that does not have to define who they may become.

You can expect us to be **TRUSTWORTHY**. We will earn your trust through our words, actions and follow through. Things sometimes are overlooked. Please point this out if needed, so that every effort can be made to resolve the issue. It may be that a referral is not made for you in a timely manner. Please remind the case manager of the need for this to happen.



Embrace Families' services are designed to assist families in resolving problems that directly or indirectly affect the safety and well-being of their children. Services may be provided without court involvement when the family is cooperative and the safety of the children in the home can be ensured without judicial intervention and oversight. Judicial intervention is requested when the children have been removed from the home due to safety concerns that cannot be managed in the home. Sometimes court intervention is requested when the family has been involved with the Department of Children and Families (or other child welfare agencies) in the past and the intervention was closed unsuccessfully or the parental rights to other children have been terminated.

Embrace Families also provides services to children identified as safe but at high risk of future abuse or neglect. This decision is made, based on the assessment of the Child Protective Investigator (CPI), if it is determined that the family could benefit from services and the family is willing to participate in services.



# EXPLANATION OF SERVICES

Safety Management Services: Arranged by the Child Protective Investigator (CPI). In Seminole County, the CPI is a civilian employee of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office; in Orange and Osceola Counties, the CPI is an employee of the Florida Department of Children and Families. The Child Protective Investigator (CPI) will conduct an assessment to determine if emergency/intensive intervention is necessary to stabilize a situation in the home and/or to prevent the child's removal from the home. Embrace Families subcontracts with other agencies to provide these safety management services. The intensity and array of services that are provided is dependent on the unique needs of the family and situation that has brought the family to the attention of the CPI.

- In Seminole County, the CPI may refer a family to Children's Home Society's CARE program.
- In Orange County, families may be referred to Orange County Family Preservation Services, Boy's Town Intensive In-home Services Program, or Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services' Safe at Home Program.
- In Osceola County, referrals are made to Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services' Safe at Home Program.
- All of these programs provide in-home parent education, counseling services and linkage to community resources.

Family Support Services: Services for children and families may be arranged by the CPI if the family is found to be at high or very high risk of abuse or neglect. Services are referred to support the family. The focus on the service plan is on strengthening the protective factors of the parent through addressing areas such as: nurturing and attachment, knowledge of child development, parental resilience, developing supportive social connections, learning how to navigate concrete community supports, or improving the child's social or emotional competence.

Ongoing Case Management Services: Referred by the CPI when children have been removed from the home or court-ordered supervision is being requested through the filing of a shelter or dependency petition in the juvenile dependency court. Case management services may also be arranged in other situations where the CPI has identified that the family is in need of formalized protective services to ensure the ongoing safety of the child(ren) while in the home.

- In Seminole County, case management agency services are provided by Children's Home Society (CHS).
- In Orange County, case management agency services are provided by Devereux Florida, One Hope United (OHU) and Children's Home Society (CHS).
- In Osceola County, case management agency services are provided by Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services.

It is possible that your Case Manager will continue the services put in place by the CPI, as well as arrange for additional services identified as needed in a case plan developed with you, and approved by the Court.

*Florida Law (Chapter 39) requires that reasonable efforts are made to prevent the removal of a child from their home; and that, when a child is removed from the home for their protection, he/she must be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting available.*

# DEPENDENCY COURT SYSTEM

Any time there is a concern that a child has been, or is in immediate danger of being, abused, abandoned or neglected, a petition may be filed in Juvenile Dependency Court. The Court will decide if the legal standard is met for requiring intervention, and will seek to ensure that children are safe and protected and that families receive help with the problems that brought them into court. Dependency Court is not about punishing parents or handling criminal charges. Also, the court files in dependency cases are confidential and not open to the public.

You will always be notified of hearing dates. It is very important that you attend all hearings. If you don't appear at a hearing, it will still be held and decisions will be made without you. If there is a critical reason why you are unable to attend a hearing, you must contact your lawyer immediately. It is also essential that you keep your Case Manager, your lawyer and the Dependency Court informed of your current address and telephone number.

You also have a responsibility to continue to provide financial support for your child, even when he or she is being cared for outside of your home. The Dependency Court or the Department of Revenue will review how much money you earn and determine how much you can or should be able to pay to support your child.

Parents or guardians have the right to be represented by an attorney in Dependency Court. You have the right to have a lawyer advise and represent you at all hearings and proceedings in a dependency case. If you can't afford to hire a lawyer, the Dependency Court will appoint one to help you. To determine if you qualify to have a lawyer provided to you at no cost, you will need to complete some paperwork for the Dependency Court detailing how much you earn and what kind of property you own. Please keep in mind that all legal matters should be discussed with your attorney.

You have the right to:

- Be represented by a lawyer at every stage of your case or to represent yourself in court.
- Have a lawyer appointed if you cannot afford representation.
- Be notified of all court hearings and to be present at them.
- See copies of any DCF or Guardian ad Litem report filed in your case or presented at a hearing.
- Receive services to help you get your child(ren) back.
- Know any costs for services.
- Be consulted about medical treatment and travel if your child(ren) is/are placed outside of your home.
- Keep in contact with and visit your child(ren), unless otherwise ordered by the Court.

# ROLES IN THE COURT SYSTEM

**Child Protective Investigator (CPI)** responds to and investigates a report of suspected child abuse, neglect or abandonment.

**Judge** decides what is best for the child entering protective supervision or foster care.

**General Magistrate** may hear cases and make a recommendation to the Judge regarding what should happen.

**Guardian ad Litem (GAL)** is someone who represents the best interests of your child in the court case. A GAL is separate from DCF/Embrace Families and the Dependency Court, so he or she can provide the Judge with independent information and recommendations on such matters as: the welfare of your child, your progress with your case plan, what type of visitation is recommended, where your child should live or go to school, and when your child can be safely returned to your care. A GAL may visit with your child, talk with you about your situation, and get other information from family members, teachers, doctors, and other people who know you and your child.

In a **Shelter Hearing**, the Dependency Court determines whether there is evidence to keep a child who has been removed from his/her home by a Child Protective Investigator, in an out of home placement pending further investigation by the CPI. This hearing must happen within 24 hours of the child being removed from their home.

**Arraignment** provides the parent(s) an opportunity to admit, consent or deny the abuse or neglect allegations.

**Mediation** is an impartial process through which everyone can discuss their views on the case and the best interests of the child. A mediator is a neutral person who will help everyone share what they think about the situation in a productive way. Mediations are confidential; they do not take place in a courtroom and they are not recorded. However, if everyone comes to an agreement during the mediation, the final agreement will be sent to the Dependency Judge. No other information besides a final agreement will be sent to the Judge. *Cases can be referred to mediation at any point during the dependency process.*

**Adjudication** is the finding of whether or not there has been abuse, neglect or abandonment. For an adjudication of dependency, the Judge only has to find that there is a preponderance of evidence (more evidence that supports the child has been abused/neglected than evidence to the contrary).

**Disposition** sets forth the specific services needed by the child(ren) and families through a court ordered and approved case plan.

In a **Judicial Review (JR)**, the Court reviews the services ordered, progress of family on case plan, and changes in the child(ren) and family's status. Judicial Reviews can occur at 3 or 6 month intervals. If the child(ren) remains in foster care, Judicial Reviews must occur every 6 months.

**Permanency Hearing** is a special judicial review hearing that is held no later than 12 months after the child was originally removed from the home. At this hearing, the Department of Children & Families formally presents the permanency plan for the child to the Court.

**Central Florida Dependency Court Locations:** Court proceedings take place in one of the following locations. This is where you may need to go to participate in court proceedings. Please arrive in time to be checked in through security. The Court Deputy will direct you where to wait for your case to be called.

■ Orange County Juvenile Court  
2000 East Michigan Street  
Orlando, FL 32806  
407.836.7520

■ Osceola County Juvenile Court  
2 Courthouse Square, #2000  
Kissimmee, FL 34741  
407.742.3500

■ Seminole County Juvenile Court  
190 Bush Blvd.  
Sanford, FL 32773  
407.665.5350

## VISITATION FOR CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT

**Parent-Child Visits.** It is important that you participate in regular and frequent visits with your child(ren), unless the Court decides visits are not in your child's best interest. Regular visitation is important to maintain the child/parent bond and to ensure a successful and timely reunification.

Your Case Manager will develop a visitation schedule with you and help initiate visitation. At a minimum, bi-weekly visits will be arranged, unless the Court enters a specific visitation order. The frequency of the visits will depend on the circumstances and the desire you have, as a parent, to see your child and work toward timely reunification. As the projected date for reunification approaches, unsupervised and extended visits, such as overnight and weekends, may be arranged.

Your Case Manager will, whenever possible, arrange for visitation to occur in a relaxed and natural setting: the foster home, a supervised visitation center, or community parks or playgrounds. The child's safety is foremost when determining visit locations.

### FAMILY VISITATION PROGRAM

- Embrace Families partners with Children's Home Society of Florida to offer Family Visitation in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. Participation in the program is referred by Case Management or Dependency Court.
- Children's Home Society of Florida provides on-site monitoring of visitation for children with their families. The goal is to support the parent and child through the visitation process.
- The Supervised Visitation Program is available to children in foster care or out-of-home care.

**For more information, call 407.460.8365.**

**Sibling Visits.** Your Case Manager will arrange for regular and frequent visits between siblings who are not living together, as long as the Judge has not ordered otherwise and visits are not therapeutically counter-indicated.

**Cancellation of Visits.** Every effort should be made to keep the scheduled visitation. If a visit must be canceled, notification must be made at least 24 hours in advance. Reasons for missed visits are recorded in the case file and the information will be reported to the Court, to be presented at the next hearing.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Embrace Families will comply with laws and regulations concerning privacy and protection of information. During the initial contact, your Case Manager will explain what informed consent for *Release of Confidential Information* means. The Case Manager will then ask you to sign an Embrace Families authorization form, allowing us to release information both to and from DCF/Embrace Families to other involved agencies, providers, schools, etc. Personal information cannot be released verbally or in writing until the *Consent to Release/Request Information* form(s) has been signed and dated.

When Embrace Families needs information from other sources that would be helpful in providing appropriate services to the child(ren) and family, your Case Manager will:

- Specify the information needed
- Explain why the information is needed
- Complete the Consent to Release/Request Information form
- Obtain consent from your parent or guardian if you are a child
- Obtain consent from your guardian if you are a person who has a legal guardian



## **The Consent for Release/Request of Information form must specify:**

- Name of the source being requested for information
- Information that is being requested
- Embrace Families as the agency requesting the information
- Date the form was signed
- Length of time the request form is in legal effect

## **Informed Consent**

It is important that you are fully informed about the services you are receiving from Embrace Families. Please read every form before you sign and ask for assistance in understanding the services you are to receive, prior to agreeing and signing the form. This understanding is intended to help when making an informed decision about participation in services provided by Embrace Families. The forms you will be requested to sign depend on the type of service your family is receiving and may include:

- Consent for Embrace Families services
- Medical consent to treat a minor child in case of emergency
- Medical consent to treat a minor child using psychotropic medication
- Medical consent to treat for routine healthcare
- Consent to enroll a minor child in recreational activities
- Release/Request for information
- Consent for a Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment (CBHA)

# **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

## **Rights of Children in Foster Care:**

- To be placed in a foster placement setting that best meets their emotional and physical needs; to be placed with siblings whenever possible; and to be placed in an environment that helps establish or maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- To have regular visitation with their parents or guardians, siblings, and other individuals with whom they have a meaningful and positive relationship. To have regular visitation with their Case Manager.
- To receive honest and complete information regarding any and all decisions affecting them that relate to their case and to actively participate in the case planning process, appropriate to age and ability.
- To attend any and all court hearings regarding their case.
- To have a Guardian ad Litem appointed as their advocate in judicial proceedings, when they have been abused, neglected or abandoned.
- To be heard or to have a private conversation with their Case Manager, unless the law requires the Case Manager to notify someone in authority of suspected abuse or neglect or life threatening situation.

## **Responsibilities of Children in Foster Care:**

- To tell their Case Manager and foster parents/caregiver when something is wrong or they have concerns.
- To attend school and ask for tutoring assistance, if needed.
- To follow the rules of the home they are living in. To ask politely if they don't understand why something is a rule.

## **Rights of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian:**

- To be treated as individuals and with respect.
- To have custody of their child, unless it has been demonstrated that this would jeopardize the child's health and welfare.
- To be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their capacity to provide a suitable home for their child; to regain custody of their child as quickly as possible, when regaining custody is consistent with the health and welfare needs of their child.
- To receive proper and adequate notice regarding any grievance or legal proceeding concerning their child.
- To participate in the case plan, receive a copy of the case plan, and receive notice of any review of the case plan.
- To visit and communicate with their child(ren) within reasonable guidelines, as set by the family services case plan and the court.
- To have their cultural, religious, ethnic and/or racial heritage respected.
- To receive a detailed report describing the goals that must be met according to the case plan.
- To have information kept confidential, unless the law requires the Case Manager to notify someone in authority of suspected abuse, neglect or a life-threatening situation.

## **Responsibilities of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian:**

When children are placed out of the home, this does not mean that the parent does not have any responsibility for the child. While children are placed in foster care, parents have the responsibility:

- To participate in planning for their child(ren)'s needs to the extent they are able, including financial, clothing, mementos, pictures, and familiar items from their home.
- To participate in assessing the services and support the family needs to achieve reunification as indicated in the case plan.
- To maintain contact and regular visitation with their child(ren) in care.
- To notify their Case Manager of any changes in their lives (change in address, employment, health status, or other circumstances) related to their participation in the family services case plan.
- To make decisions about their child(ren) that are legally theirs to make, such as consenting to medical and surgical treatment, to marriage, or to service in the armed forces.
- To provide for the care, safety and protection of their child(ren) during visitation (at home or supervised).

## Responsibilities of Foster and Adoptive Parents:

- To prepare their own children and family regarding the impact that fostering/adopting may have on them.
- To assist the child(ren) in understanding and appreciating the heritage received from their parents or guardians.
- To keep the child safe and provide for their physical, educational and emotional needs.
- To give the child(ren) unconditional love and acceptance, with the understanding that many children may not be able to give it back.
- To keep your Case Manager informed of the child's response to care, visitation and progress in school.
- To ensure that the child receives preventative and medical, dental and vision evaluations and care as set forth in the periodicity schedule.
- To facilitate and/or supervise visitations between parent-child and siblings in accordance with the case plan.

## PLANNING AND ACCESSING SERVICES

Case Managers provide different levels of care to children and families depending upon the identified needs of the family. These services may include in-home family preservation services, court supervised in-home family preservation services, court supervised out-of-home placement services, and pre-adoption and adoption services.

Your Case Manager will work closely with you and your family to complete an assessment of your family's needs, identifying your family service team, and completing your family services case plan. The Family Services Team (FST) will include you, your child(ren) and family, the Case Manager and Supervisor, Guardian ad Litem, DCF attorney, your attorney and service providers that are active in your case and who will assist you in achieving your case plan goals. The FST is facilitated by Embrace Families operations staff. You will help identify other members of the Family Services Team, who may include: relatives, representatives from your child's school, a pastor, etc. The Family Services Team meeting is held in the first month following referral for all children placed in out-of-home care, and then every 3 months thereafter, until the child is reunified or other permanency is achieved for the child.

Your Case Manager may refer you to a network of community-based service providers that will assist you in achieving your family services case plan goals. Your Case Manager will coordinate and monitor those services to ensure that you are in fact receiving them and that you are making progress. When required, your Case Manager will provide the court with a progress report outlining the goals and achievements. Furthermore, your Case Manager may make recommendations to the court regarding changes in services and/or level of care.

Your Case Manager will meet with you in person each month to review your case plan, your progress, and to determine if there are any needed changes to your services. Should you have any questions, concerns, or problems, please feel free to contact your Case Manager or their Supervisor.

# EMBRACE FAMILIES CLIENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Embrace Families is committed to providing the highest quality of service to children and families. Contained in this commitment are the processes to facilitate the resolution of complaints related to services. It is the intention of Embrace Families to address complaints in an effort to assure client safety, program effectiveness and community confidence in our services.

**If you need to file a complaint, here are the steps to follow:**

**Step 1:** First try to resolve the issue with the individual involved (Case Manager or Supervisor). Sometimes problems can be easily resolved at the source.

**Step 2:** If your issue is still not resolved, contact your assigned Case Management Agency Program Director (person who has direct authority over the Case Management Agency Supervisor). Agency Program Director contact information is found on page 4.

**Step 3:** If your issue is still not resolved, you can call the Embrace Families Administrative Support Office at 321.441.2060 and identify the nature of your call as: **Service Complaint**. Brief screening information will be requested and then forwarded to the appropriate Embrace Families Executive Director in the county where is your case is assigned. The Embrace Families Executive Director (or designee) will return your call as soon as possible, but no later than 24 business hours, to obtain additional information and to address issues that can be readily resolved.

You may also make a service complaint by clicking the "Give Us Feedback" section on our website: [www.EmbraceFamilies.org](http://www.EmbraceFamilies.org)

If you leave your contact information, you will receive a response by the next business day. The person who contacts you will help you connect with the appropriate resources to review your issue or concern. Our goal is to resolve any conflict that you are experiencing.

**Step 4:** If you are not satisfied with the resolution of your complaint, this must be addressed with the Embrace Families Executive Director. After discussion, if you are still unsatisfied, you may request an internal review by the Embrace Families President/CEO, Glen Casel, who may be reached at 321.441.2060.



# MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION POLICY (HIPAA)

This notice describes how your Protected Health Information may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. *Please review this information carefully.*

## I. Embrace Families Duties as They Relate to Your Protected Health Information (PHI)

Embrace Families' records contain health information that is very personal. The confidentiality of this personal information is protected by federal and state law. Embrace Families has a duty to safeguard your Protected Health Information (PHI), which includes individually identifiable information about:

- Your past, present or future health or condition
- Provision of health care to you
- Payment for the health care considered PHI

Embrace Families is required to:

- Safeguard the privacy of your PHI
- Give you this Notice, which describes our privacy practices
- Explain how, when and why we may use or disclose your PHI

Except in very specific circumstances, Embrace Families must use or disclose only the minimum PHI that is necessary to accomplish the reason for the use or disclosure. Embrace Families must follow the privacy practices described in this Notice; however, Embrace Families reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice at any time and to make the new Notice provisions effective for all Protected Health Information (PHI) that we receive, disclose or maintain. Should Embrace Families' Notice change, Embrace Families will post a new Notice in the lobby of each office.

### Why Embrace Families May Need to Use or Disclose Your PHI:

Embrace Families uses or discloses PHI for a variety of reasons. For some of these uses or disclosures, Embrace Families must have your written authorization. For some, the law permits Embrace Families to use or disclose without your authorization.

Generally these uses or disclosures are related to treatment, payment or health care operations. Some examples of these uses or disclosures are:

- For Treatment: Embrace Families may disclose your PHI to doctors, nurses and other health care personnel who are involved in providing for your health care. For example, your PHI will be shared among members of your treatment team.
- To Obtain Payment: Embrace Families may use or disclose your PHI in order to bill and collect payment for your health care services. For example, Embrace Families may release portions of your PHI to Medicaid to get paid for services that Embrace Families has given or provided to you.
- For Health Care Operations: Embrace Families may use or disclose your PHI in the course of operating agency. For example, Embrace Families may use your PHI in evaluating the quality of services provided, or disclose your PHI to our accountant or attorney for audit purposes.
- To Remind You of Appointments: Unless you provide Embrace Families with alternative instructions, Embrace Families may send appointment reminders and other similar materials to your home.

## **Uses and Disclosures for Which Embrace Families Requires Your Authorization (Consent):**

- When the use or disclosure goes beyond treatment, payment, or health care operations, Embrace Families is required to have your written authorization. There are some exceptions to this rule, and they are listed below.
- Authorizations can be revoked by you at any time to stop future uses or disclosures, except where we have already used or disclosed your PHI in reliance upon your authorization.

## **Uses and Disclosures for Which Embrace Families Does Not Require Your Authorization:**

The law permits Embrace Families to use or disclose your PHI without written authorization in the following circumstances:

- **When a Law Requires Disclosure:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI when a law requires that Embrace Families report information about suspected abuse, neglect or domestic violence, or in response to a court order, or to a law enforcement official. Embrace Families must also disclose PHI to authorities who monitor Embrace Families' compliance with these privacy requirements.
- **For Public Health Activities:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI when Embrace Families is required to collect information about diseases or injuries, or to report vital statistics to a public health authority.
- **For Health Oversight Activities:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI for health oversight activities, such as audits, inspections, civil or criminal investigations or actions.
- **Relating to Decedents:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI relating to an individual's death or to coroners, medical examiners or funeral directors.
- **For Organ, Eye or Tissue Donations Purposes:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI to organ procurement organizations relating to organ, eye or tissue donations or transplants.
- **For Research Purposes:** In certain circumstances, and under supervision of a privacy board or institutional review board, Embrace Families may disclose PHI for research purposes.
- **To Avert Threat to Health or Safety:** In order to avoid a serious threat to health or safety, Embrace Families may disclose PHI as necessary to law enforcement or other persons who can reasonably prevent or lessen the threat of harm.
- **For Specialized Government Functions:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI of military personnel and veterans in certain situations, to correctional facilities in certain situations, to government programs relating to eligibility and enrollment, and for national security reasons, such as protection of the President.
- **For Worker's Compensation:** Embrace Families may disclose PHI to comply with workers' compensation laws.

## **Uses or Disclosures for Which You Must be Given an Opportunity to Object:**

Embrace Families may disclose your PHI if we have advised you that your information would be disclosed and you did not object. Some examples are:

- **Patient Directories:** Your name, location, general condition and religious affiliation may be added to Embrace Families' patient directory for use by clergy and callers or visitors who ask for you by name.
- **To Family, Friends, or Others Involved in Your Case:** Embrace Families may share information directly related to your family's, friends' or other person's involvement in your case or payment of your care. Embrace Families may also share PHI with these people to notify them about your location, general condition or death.

If there is an emergency situation and Embrace Families does not have time to allow you to object to the disclosure, Embrace Families may still disclose your PHI if you have previously given your permission and disclosure is determined to be in your best interests. If Embrace Families does this, you must be informed and given an opportunity to object to further disclosure as soon as you are able to do so.

## **II. Your Rights as They Relate to Your Protected Health Information (PHI)**

You have the following rights related to your PHI:

- **To Request Restrictions on Uses or Disclosures:** You have the right to ask that we limit how Embrace Families uses or discloses your PHI. Embrace Families will consider your request, but is not legally bound to agree to the restriction. To the extent that Embrace Families does agree to any restrictions on use or disclosure of your PHI, Embrace Families will put the agreement in writing and abide by it except in emergency situations. Embrace Families cannot agree to limit uses or disclosures that are required by law.
- **To Choose How Embrace Families Contacts You:** You have the right to ask that Embrace Families send you information at an alternative address or by an alternative means. Embrace Families must agree to your request as long as it is reasonably easy for Embrace Families to do so.
- **To Inspect and Copy Your PHI:** Unless your access is restricted for clear and documented reasons, you have a right to see your Protected Health Information if you put your request in writing. Embrace Families will respond to your request within 30 days for PHI kept on site, and within 60 days for PHI that is not kept on site. If your access is denied, Embrace Families will give you written reasons for the denial and explain any right to have the denial reviewed. If you want copies of your PHI, a charge for copying may be imposed.
- **To Request Amendment of Your PHI:** If you believe that there is a mistake or missing information in Embrace Families' record of your PHI, you may request, in writing, that we correct or add to the record. Embrace Families will respond within 60 days of receiving your request. Embrace Families may deny the request if it is determined that the PHI is:
  - a) correct and complete;
  - b) not created by Embrace Families or not part of Embrace Families' records; or,
  - c) not permitted to be disclosed.

A denial will state the reasons for denial. It will also explain your rights to have your request, Embrace Families denial, and any statement in response that you provide, added to your PHI.

If Embrace Families approves the request for amendment, Embrace Families will change the PHI and inform you, as well as tell others who need to know about the change in the PHI.

- **To Find Out What Disclosures Have Been Made:** You have the right to get a list of when, to whom, for what purposes, and what content of your PHI has been released, except for instances of disclosure that were made for treatment, for payment, for health care operations, to you, per a written authorization, for national security or intelligence purposes, to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials, or for the facility directory. The list also will not include any disclosures made before October 1, 2004.

Embrace Families will respond to your written request for such a list within 60 days of receiving it. Your request can relate to disclosures going as far back as Embrace Families' inception. There may be a charge for such requests.

- **To Receive a Copy of This Notice:** You have a right to receive a paper copy of this Notice.

### **III. How To Complain About Our Privacy Practices**

If you think Embrace Families may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision Embrace Families made about access to your PHI, you may file a complaint with the person listed in Section IV below. You also may file a written complaint addressed to the following: Florida Department of Children and Families, Office of Civil Rights, 1317 Winewood Boulevard, Building 6, Room 124, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700, 850.487.1901. Embrace Families takes no retaliatory action against you if you make such complaints.

### **IV. Contact Person For Additional Information, or To Submit A Complaint**

If you have questions about this Notice, need additional information, or have any complaints about our privacy practices:

Contact Gerry Glynn, Chief Legal Officer, Embrace Families at 321.441.1572

Or write Embrace Families at 4001 Pelee Street, Orlando, FL 32817; Fax 407.681.0560



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received the Parent Handbook for Embrace Families. This includes Management and Protection of Personal Health Information Policy as required by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). My initials and signature below indicate that I have received, read and understand Embrace Families' service delivery procedures.

**Please initial each line item** indicating that you received the Embrace Families Parent Handbook and that it contained information on each of the following subjects:

- \_\_\_\_\_ My rights as a Embrace Families client have been reviewed with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the staff providing services will meet professional standards and requirements pertinent to the services provided.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that Embrace Families staff are mandated to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or information that is life threatening to the appropriate authorities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand risks and benefits are associated with services and have discussed service specific concerns with Embrace Families staff or my assigned Case Manager, if applicable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to attend scheduled appointments and to call 24 hours in advance to cancel when I cannot attend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unless otherwise court ordered, I understand that I have a choice to participate in the services provided by Embrace Families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that if a crisis situation arises (a non-life threatening situation):  
During business hours, I can call 321.441.2060 for immediate assistance;  
After hours, I can call Embrace Families Intake and Placement at 407.304.8444.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my treatment, payment, enrollment, or eligibility for benefits will not be conditioned on whether I sign this authorization.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that information used or disclosed pursuant to this authorization may be disclosed by the recipient and may no longer be protected by federal or state law.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Information regarding HIPAA has been provided to me through provision of this Parent Handbook, and contained herein.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Parent/Client Signature	Date	Embrace Families Staff/Case Manager Signature	Date

*NOTE: Original Acknowledgment of Receipt form is to be signed by the client and filed in the client's record to document receipt of the above information.*

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# IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Dependency Case Manager: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Manager's Supervisor: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian Ad Litem: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Attorney: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Administrative Support Center**  
**4001 Pelee Street - Orlando, FL 32817**  
**321.441.2060**

**Orange County West Service Center**  
**5749 Westgate Drive, Ste. 200 - Orlando, FL 32835**  
**321.441.1567**

**Orange County East Service Center**  
**1900 Alafaya Trail, Ste. 900 - Orlando, FL 32826**  
**321.207.8200**

**Osceola County Service Center**  
**111 E. Monument Ave, Ste. 501 - Kissimmee, FL 34741**  
**321.442.8487**

**Seminole County Service Center**  
**2921 South Orlando Ave, Ste. 150 - Sanford, FL 32773**  
**407.688.9650**

