

1204

SURROGATE PARENT(S)

In certain situations, a surrogate parent is appointed for a child in the SoonerStart program to protect the child's rights to a free appropriate public education which includes early intervention services.

A surrogate is needed when no parent can be identified (see definition of "parent" in *Parent Rights for SoonerStart Services – Notice of Procedural Safeguards*); and SoonerStart staff, after reasonable efforts, cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent. This may occur if a child is residing with a non-related person who provides for, and makes decisions regarding the child's welfare.

A surrogate parent should have the knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child. The surrogate parent cannot be an employee of SoonerStart, or any other agency (i.e. DHS) that is involved in the education or care of the child and must have no interest that conflicts with the interest of the child he or she represents.

The surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation, and development of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for the child. The SoonerStart service coordinator will provide the surrogate parent with information regarding parental rights and procedural safeguards and complete the *Surrogate Parent Verification of Training* form. **(Appendix I)** Documentation must be included in the service coordinator's progress notes that this activity was completed.