



**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

DATE: March 5, 2013

TO: Regional Managing Directors

THROUGH: Pete Digre, Assistant Secretary for Operations
Elisa Cramer, Director of Family and Community Services

FROM: Andrea M. Tulloch, Esq., Director, Office of Child Welfare

SUBJECT: Normalcy, Babysitting, Vacation, and Emergency Care for Children in Out-of-Home Care

PURPOSE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to case managers and foster parents regarding normalcy, babysitting, vacations, and emergency care of children in out-of-home care. This guidance reiterates what Secretary Wilkins has emphasized: "The most important job we have in child welfare is to protect a young person's opportunity to have a healthy, normal childhood."

BACKGROUND: As previously shared, the Department will fully and completely support the efforts of caregivers, providers, and Community-Based Care lead agencies (CBC) to ensure that children in our care have the opportunity to fully participate in activities in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. To solidify this culture change, the Department published a Notice of Proposed Rule in the Florida Administrative Weekly, Vol. 38/91, on December 14, 2012. This published notice enables the Department, providers, and foster parents to fully embrace normalcy for children in our care.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please disseminate this memorandum to all regional child welfare staff, CBCs, case managers, licensing specialists, providers, and foster parents. The following describes the expectations around normalcy.

Normalcy

- The foster parent will:
 - promote normalcy for each child to the fullest extent possible;
 - encourage and give permission to the child, dependent on his or her age and maturity level, to engage and participate in appropriate social and extracurricular activities in order to promote social development, obtain employment, have contact with family members, have access to phone usage, have reasonable curfews, and travel with other youth or adults;

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

- allow the child to participate in social media without supervision as long as permission has been given from the caregiver;
 - permit the child to take part in overnight or planned outings which support recreation and normal life experiences, as long as the licensed caregiver has determined the outing to be safe and appropriate;
 - notify the case manager of overnight stays exceeding one night, prior to the event occurring; and
 - be sensitive to the input of the child's parent as to the types of activities they would like their child to participate in, and whenever possible, include them in the decision making.
- Background screening is not necessary for a child to participate in normal school or community activities and outings, such as school field trips, dating, scout campouts, and activities with friends, families, school, and church groups.

Babysitting

- Babysitters can be 14 years or older; however, babysitters who are 14 and 15 years of age must have completed a recognized babysitting course. The CBC must approve the educational course on babysitting.
- The foster parent will ensure the:
 - babysitter is suitable and appropriate for the age, developmental level, and behaviors of the child;
 - babysitter receives guidance on handling emergencies, including telephone numbers for themselves, case manager, and physician; and
 - discipline and confidentiality policies for the child have been fully explained.
- Babysitting does not have to occur in a licensed setting.

Vacations

The foster parent may take the child on family vacations and trips, whenever possible. The foster parent must inform the case manager of the arrangements for the vacation or trip ahead of departure.

Emergency Care

In emergency situations when the foster parent has to be absent overnight and the child cannot accompany them, the foster parent may select a family or person who is well known to them to take care of the child.

- In these types of emergency situations, the foster parent:
 - assures the home is safe, and child proofed for the child's age and maturity level; and
 - must notify the case manager of the emergency arrangement made.

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- The CBC must perform a local criminal and child abuse background check within twenty-four (24) hours of the family or person who is caring for the child.
- The CBC must develop an approval process for emergency supervision arrangements.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions, or for additional information, please contact either Kristi Gilmore at (850) 717-4659 or by email at Kristi_Gilmore@dcf.state.fl.us or Marci Kirkland at (850) 717-4667 or by email at Marci_Kirkland@dcf.state.fl.us.

cc: CBC Contract Managers