



Tennessee Department of Children's Services Protocol for Respite Care and Other Events

Supplemental to DCS Policy: 16.8 Responsibilities of Approved Foster Homes

Respite is the paid or unpaid provision of short-term planned or emergency care of a child or children in order to provide temporary relief to caregivers who are responsible for the routine care of child(ren). Respite provides temporary relief, reduces caregiver stress and promotes the stability of placements. Respite needs are discussed with foster parents during monthly Foster Parent Support visits.

The [*Protocol for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting*](#) allows foster parents flexibility in decision making as to when youth in foster care can participate in activities that are intended to maintain a child's health, safety and best interests while encouraging the child's emotional, academic and developmental growth. The goal of exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard is to attempt to normalize experiences for youth in care. Foster parents should use their best judgment (defined as "would you leave your biological child with this person?") when making respite placement decisions.

When a resource parent is in need of respite, the following steps must be taken:

A. Respite Placement with Non-Paid Foster Parent's Family, Friends or Approved Foster Homes

1. Foster parents may select a respite care provider with friends, family members or other approved foster parents. If assistance is needed with making respite arrangements, contact with FPS occurs ten (10) business days prior to placement need.

NOTE: Respite to exceed a period of forty-eight (48) hours and is to be provided by a friend or family member must be cleared by a criminal background check with local law enforcement or court record.

2. Foster Parent Support (FPS) and Family Support Workers (FSW) must be informed of any respite plans for a custodial child exceeding forty-eight (48) hours prior to the respite occurring. Notice may be provided via text, e-mail, telephone or in person.
3. The Regional Administrator must approve any respite request that exceeds seven (7) consecutive days.
4. FPS and FSW discuss with the foster parents the provisions in place to ensure that the respite placement is able to meet the child's needs including but not limited to transportation, special health, dietary, well-being or safety needs. This includes any safety plans regarding children with high risk behaviors.
5. If a child with special health care needs (medically fragile) will be placed in respite, the regional health nurse must be notified prior to the respite event. The nurse can help with coordinating training with health care providers on the child's specific medical care, use of medical equipment and supplies, safety, and other needs.

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6. Prior to respite, FPS and FSW ensure the foster parent provides the respite family with all information required in the event of an emergency that may occur with the child. This includes but is not limited to after-hours/on-call phone numbers, medical services, etc.
7. When respite is utilized in response to a foster home emergency, communication between the foster parent, FSW, FPS and respite caregiver should take place to ensure the foster child's emotional needs are being met in response to the family crisis.

NOTE: Contract Agencies may set the rules, rates and limitations of respite for their agency, however, they also must receive Regional Administrator approval for any respite that extends beyond seven (7) days.

B. Respite Placement with Paid Approved Foster Homes

1. Foster parents may select a respite care provider with another approved foster family. If assistance is needed with making respite arrangements, contact with FPS occurs ten (10) business days prior to placement need.
2. Foster Parent Support (FPS) and Family Support Workers (FSW) must be informed of any respite plans for a custodial child exceeding forty-eight (48) hours prior to the respite occurring. Notice may be provided via text, e-mail, telephone or in person.
3. The Regional Administrator must approve any respite request that exceeds seven (7) consecutive days.
4. FPS and FSW discuss with the foster parents the provisions in place to ensure that the respite placement is able to meet the child's needs including but not limited to transportation, special health, dietary, well-being or safety needs. This includes any safety plans regarding children with high risk behaviors.
5. If a child with special health care needs (medically fragile) will be placed in respite, the regional health nurse must be notified prior to the respite event. The nurse can help with coordinating training with health care providers on the child's specific medical care, use of medical equipment and supplies, safety, and other needs.
6. Prior to respite, FPS and FSW ensure the foster parent provides the respite family with all information required in the event of an emergency that may occur with the child. This includes but is not limited to after-hours/on-call phone numbers, medical services, etc.
7. When respite is utilized in response to a foster home emergency, communication between the foster parent, FSW, FPS and respite caregiver should take place to ensure the foster child's emotional needs are being met in response to the family crisis.
8. It is the responsibility of the foster parent utilizing respite to ensure timely monetary reimbursement to the respite family. The respite rate shall be equal to the child's daily placement board rate as

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indicated in DCS Policy [16.29 Foster Home Board Rates](#). Rates include funds for DCS foster parents to pay for up to two (2) days of respite per month or a maximum of twenty-four (24) days of respite per fiscal year.

- 9. Respite requests that exceed the built-in allowance is considered supplemental respite days and requires pre-authorization from the Regional Administrator. Once approved, the FPS worker enters a case service request following the pathway below:

SERVICE_ID	202941
SERVICE_GROUP	Custodial Services
CATEGORY_TYPE	Support Services
SERVICE_TYPE	Foster Parent Support
SERVICE_DESC	Foster Parent Supplemental Respite

NOTE: Supplemental respite care must be provided by an approved foster family only.

- 10. The supplemental respite provider must complete their portion of the billing section and return the form to the FPS worker within thirty (30) days of providing the respite service.

NOTE: Contract Agencies may set the rules, rates and limitations of respite for their agency, however, they also must receive Regional Administrator approval for any respite that extends beyond seven (7) days.

C. Respite Placement with Biological Relatives/Kin

- 1. To maintain family/kin connections, biological relatives/kin should be considered as a respite care provider. Examples: a grandmother that does not have the means to be a long term placement but wants to remain involved; or a teacher that has a significant relationship with a child but is unwilling to be a placement option.
 - ◆ Cleared by a criminal background check with a local law enforcement or court record;
 - ◆ Any court required authorizations must be honored; and,
 - ◆ Relative/Kin will not receive reimbursement for providing respite
- 2. Foster Parent Support (FPS) and Family Support Workers (FSW) must be informed of any respite plans for a custodial child exceeding forty-eight (48) hours prior to the respite occurring. Notice may be provided via text, e-mail, telephone or in person.
- 3. The Regional Administrator must approve any respite request that exceeds seven (7) consecutive days.

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4. FPS and FSW discuss with the foster parents the provisions in place to ensure that the respite placement is able to meet the child's needs including but not limited to transportation, special health, dietary, well-being or safety needs. This includes any safety plans regarding children with high risk behaviors.
5. If a child with special health care needs (medically fragile) will be placed in respite, the regional health nurse must be notified prior to the respite event. The nurse can help with coordinating training with health care providers on the child's specific medical care, use of medical equipment and supplies, safety, and other needs.
6. Prior to respite, FPS and FSW ensure the foster parent provides the respite family with all information required in the event of an emergency that may occur with the child. This includes but is not limited to after-hours/on-call phone numbers, medical services, etc.
7. When respite is utilized in response to a foster home emergency, communication between the foster parent, FSW, FPS and respite caregiver should take place to ensure the foster child's emotional needs are being met in response to the family crisis.

D. Outings and Overnight Stays

1. Foster parents will notify the FSW of any outings/overnight stays which last longer than forty-eight (48) hours.

NOTE: Outings and overnight stays may include visits with the child's approved biological family/kin.

2. The details of the outings/overnight stays may be given verbally and on short notice. However, a minimum one business day advanced communication with the department is preferred.
3. Any court required authorizations must be honored.
4. The FSW must inform foster parents of any contact restrictions set by either the court or the department.
5. Foster parents may always consult with the child's FSW if they are unsure about giving permission for an outing or overnight stay.

NOTE: DCS cannot pay any individual for providing supervision or care for a custodial child for the purpose of an outing or overnight stay with the exception of pre-authorized approval for church camps, band camps, etc.

E. Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Trips

DCS does not provide money for family trips or vacations. The expectation is the foster family will include the foster children in their vacation plans. If a foster family chooses to do so and the family trip or vacation takes them out-of-state or out-of-country, permission must be obtained at a minimum seven (7) business days prior to expected travel for authorization. Form [CS-0679](#).

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[Authorization DCS Child to Travel Out of State/Out of Country](#) is to be completed and approved the Regional Administrator or designee.

Foster parents that routinely take trips across bordering state lines for the purposes of shopping and recreation are to complete form [CS-0679](#) quarterly.

F. Documentation

FSW and FPS staff document in TFACTS case recordings all interaction with foster parents regarding the items of this protocol. Content is to be specific to the type of notification, discussion, assistance provided and outcomes of each situation.

	Paid Respite	Unpaid Respite	Supplemental Respite
Respite > 48 hours with Family & Friends			
Notification to FSW and FPS and regional health nurse if applicable		X	
Criminal History Check (local law enforcement or court documentation)		X	
Regional Administrator authorization if respite placement to exceed 7 days		X	
Foster Parent responsible for payment to respite placement			
DCS responsible for payment to respite placement			
Court authorizations to be honored		X	
Respite > 48 hours with a Foster Parent			
Notification to FSW and FPS and regional health nurse if applicable	X	X	X
Criminal History Check (local law enforcement or court documentation)			
Regional Administrator authorization if respite placement to exceed 7 days	X	X	X
Foster Parent responsible for payment to respite placement	X		
DCS responsible for payment to respite placement			X
Court authorizations to be honored	X	X	X
Respite > 48 hours with Child Biological Family/Kin			
Notification to FSW and FPS and regional health nurse if applicable		X	

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Criminal History Check (local law enforcement or court documentation)		X	
Regional Administrator authorization if respite placement to exceed 7 days		X	
Court authorizations to be honored	X	X	

Outings and Overnight Stays	Yes	No
Notification to FSW if Time Frame > 48 hours	X	
Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Trips	Yes	No
Notification to FSW minimum 7 days prior	X	
Regional Administrator authorization	X	

Foster Parent Respite Caregiver Guidelines	
Caregiver	
Meets the child’s needs including, but not limited to, transportation, special health, dietary, well-being or safety needs.	
If it is a child with special health care needs (medically fragile) the caregiver is training by an approved medical professional in the care of the child.	
Is familiar with the child’s daily routine, preferred foods and activities.	
Respects their culture, race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation.	
Has no more than five (5) children total in the home and no more than two (2) children in therapeutic foster care.	
Emotional needs are addressed if placed during an emergency situation.	
Passed criminal history checks when applicable.	
Accepts court required authorizations, including contact restrictions.	
Foster Parent	
Has notified FSW/FPS, and regional health nurse when applicable.	
Provided and ensured understanding of the Safety Plan by the caregiver.	

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Provided caregiver with emergency contact information.
Explained court required authorizations, including contact restrictions.
Obtained DCS authorizations, when applicable.