Tennessee Department of Children's Services Protocol

for Clothing and Allowance

Supplemental to DCS Policies: *16.8, Responsibilities of Approved Foster Homes* and *16.29, Foster Home Board Rates*

DCS Foster Care Board Rates for in-state and out-of-state placements are tied to the USDA cost of raising a child in the urban south, and includes housing, respite, food, transportation, clothing, children's allowance and normal child-related activities and expenses.

More specifically, the board payment addresses:

- Living quarters, bedding, and adjustments to utilities
- Food inside and outside the home and on vacation
- Basic health and hygiene needs including laundry and haircuts
- Basic clothing needs above the clothing allotment
- Extracurricular activities (sports, lessons, club fees/uniform, instruments)
- Entertainment (movie ticket, putt putt)
- School supplies
- Transportation

Clothing: Upon custody, a clothing allotment can be accessed to purchase supplemental clothing. The clothing allotment is based on each child's needs. Below are *maximum* amounts based on age:

- 0-2 $125
- 3-4 $175
- 5-12 $200
- 13+ $250

In many areas of the state, there are exceptional Community Advisory Boards or a Resource Linkage Unit that can assist with clothing and other resources for a child. But even with these available resources, the board rate is to be utilized for basic clothing needs. The USDA estimates a low-income family spends from $670-720 per child per year for clothing. It is expected that foster parents would spend at minimum $400/year on ages 0-11 and $500/year on 12-18. DCS foster parents are to track purchases on form ***CS4204, Allowance and Clothing Log*** and attach receipts. DCS staff will engage foster parents and children in their care regarding the allocation of clothing.

Relative/kinship homes would not be held to expectation until fully approved and are receiving a full board rate. For incoming placements in an ICPC foster home, foster parents would be exempt since the sending state pays for the child's needs.

There are emergency situations based on the child's circumstances (growth spurts, runaway, weight loss, fire), which call for multiple purchases of clothing or need to purchase larger sizes. Assistance through an additional clothing allotment request and/or the usage of Delegated Authorities for the purchase of items for children 0-13 can be accessed upon approval by regional fiscal.

Any items purchased for the child (clothing, shoes, toys, etc.) become the property of the child and goes with them whenever there is a placement change.

Child allowance: In order to support normalcy for children in foster care, the foster parent will assist the child in establishing and maintaining a personal account from unearned monies provided by the foster parent from the foster care board rate consisting of a minimum of 1 dollar per day for ages 0-12, however, 2 dollars per day is required for ages 13-17. This is separate from any additional allowance the foster parent may offer the child as a reward for good behavior or completing chores.

Note: This requirement does not apply to detention centers.

Children can spend their money as they desire in accordance with their age, developmental level, and the law or program policy. Any child under a Safety Plan must be monitored to ensure items purchased do not violate the Safety Plan. The child's allowance cannot be withheld as a form of punishment. Restricting use of allowance or using a portion of the child's allowance toward the cost of restitution for damaged property is to be approved by the Child and Family Team (CFT).

Foster parents providing emergency or temporary placement are expected to provide unearned monies to children placed in their home. Foster Parents should keep currency on hand to provide to the child upon leaving their home. DCS foster parents will track monies provided to emergency or temporary placements on form ***CS4204, Allowance and Clothing Log.***

Foster parents should determine the best method of establishing a personal account for children placed in their home. The child's age and development should be considered when determining the best method. Recommendations include using a tracking log, envelopes, piggy banks, personal wallets, and purses. Foster parents will track money provided to the child and/or placed in an account. DCS foster parents will track personal allowance provision on form ***CS4204, Allowance and Clothing Log.*** DCS staff will engage foster parents and children in their care regarding the distribution of the allowance.

Contract agencies will track the allowance with debits and credits to the account. A running balance is kept, indicating the amount of allowance the child has at any given time. Allowance debits by amount are recorded on the date of the transaction with accompanying signature of the child or signatures of two witnesses if the child is unable to sign for himself/herself. The child's allowance cannot be used to purchase items that become the property of the agency, normal age-appropriate hygiene items or special clothing required by the agency or for program-planned outings.

The allowance is the property of the child and goes with them whenever there is a placement change. When a child leaves a DCS foster home or a Contract Agency's program, the total amount of the child's personal account is given to the child. In the case of the death of a child, the money is returned to the state.

Providing for the needs of children in care: A requirement of becoming a foster parent involves stability - stability in relationships, physical safety, parenting skills and family finances. Whether the child is placed in a home temporarily or until permanency is reached, the expectation is that the child's needs will be met as outlined in this document. If at any time a foster family expresses concerns for meeting those needs, the department will need to assess the foster home's ability to provide stability. This may include an assessment of the family income and expenditures to ensure the family is not relying on the foster board payment as income or an improvement plan to ensure proper training is provided.