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.

There are several types of respite available for foster parents. Foster parents can choose to secure their own respite or DCS can assist with identifying respite, if needed. If assistance is needed to secure respite, the foster parent should let their FPS (Foster Parent Support) worker know as soon as possible but at least ten (10) days prior. When a resource parent needs respite, the following steps must be taken regardless of the respite type:

- ✓ 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.

- ✓ The Regional Director must approve any respite request that exceeds seven (7) consecutive days.

- ✓ FPS and FSW discuss with the foster parents the provisions in place to ensure that the respite placement can 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.

- ✓ 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.

- ✓ Prior to respite, the 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.

- ✓ 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.

- ✓ All court orders must be communicated to the caregiver and followed during respite.

Effective Date: 8/23 Supersedes:
9/21
Supplemental to: DCS Policy 16.8, 8/3/21
SW22

- ✓ The number of children in respite caregiver homes should not exceed five (5) total children including birth, adopted and foster and not contain more than:

  - Two (2) children under age two (2);

  - Four (4) children over age thirteen (13); and

  - Two (2) children in therapeutic foster care

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

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

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.

B. Respite Placement with <u>Paid</u> Approved Foster Homes

1. 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 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.

2. Respite requests that exceed the built-in allowance is considered supplemental respite days and requires pre-authorization from the Regional Director. 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.

3. 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 processes for payment of respite may vary from the above requirements.

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. In addition to the requirements outlined in Section A, relative and kin respite must also have a completed background check with local law enforcement.

2. Relatives/Kin will not receive reimbursement for providing respite.

D. Outings and Overnight Stays

Children and youth in foster care may have opportunities for outings and overnight stays outside of traditional respite. If the foster parent is unsure about giving permission for an outing or overnight stay they should consult with the child/ youth's FSW.

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

2. The details of the outings/overnight stays should be provided to the FPS worker and FSW as soon as possible, however, they may be given verbally on short notice. A minimum of one (1) business day advanced communication with the department is preferred.

3. All 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.

NOTE: DCS cannot pay any individual for providing supervision or care for a custodial child for the purpose of an outing or overnight stay apart from 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 via form ***CS-0679, Authorization for DCS Child to Travel Out of State/Out of Country*** must be submitted to and approved by the Regional Administrator a minimum of seven (7) business days prior to expected travel for authorization.

Foster parents that routinely take trips across bordering state lines for the purposes of shopping and recreation can do so without permission if the trip is not to exceed one (1) calendar day.

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.

E. Quick Reference Table

	Notify FSW/ FPS and Regional Health Nurse (if applicable)	Criminal History Check	Foster Parent Responsible for Payment	DCS Responsible for Payment	Regional Director Approval Required for Respite Over 7 Days	May Require Court Auth
Respite with Family/ Friends	x	x If over 48 hours			x	
Respite with Foster Parent	x		x	x For supplemental respite only	x	
Respite with Child's Biological Family/Kin	x	x			x	x
Outings/Overnight Stays over 48 hrs.	x				x	

Out of State/ Country Trips	x				x For all trips over 1 day	

Foster Parent Respite Caregiver Guidelines
Caregiver
Meets the child's needs including, but not limited to, transportation, special health, dietary, wellbeing 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.
Provided caregiver with emergency contact information.
Explained court required authorizations, including contact restrictions.
Obtained DCS authorizations, when applicable.