



Department of

Children's Services

**Creating Normalcy
through Prudent Parenting
For GAL's/Courts**

Introductions



Objectives: You will be able to...

- Explain the basic concepts of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard
- Recognize the importance of normalcy for foster children
- Implement the reasonable and prudent parent standard
- Encourage access to age-appropriate activities
- Promote “normalcy” with foster youth
- Eliminate barriers to prudent parenting

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard

- Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act was signed into federal law on September 29, 2014
- Newly enacted TN legislation, signed into law on March 29, 2016, will help ensure that children and youth in foster care have opportunities to experience more of the same growing up activities that are typical among their peers who are not in foster care. The legislation (SB 2530 and HB 1530), sponsored by Senator Norris and Representative McCormick respectively, requires that foster parents follow a new “reasonable and prudent parent” standard in decision-making when determining whether to allow the child in their care to participate in activities, such as social or extracurricular activities.
- This law attempts to expand the opportunities for youth in foster care to participate in developmentally appropriate activities
- The new law requires states to support the healthy development of youth in care through implementing “reasonable and prudent parent” guidelines for decisions made by foster parents or caregivers.
- The term “prudent” means “showing care and thought for the future.”

Define “Normalcy”



Define “Normalcy”

Normalcy can be described as:

- the ability to easily participate in age-appropriate social, scholastic, and enrichment activities that promote the well-being of foster youth.

Normalcy

And young people know that it is not normal:

- ✓ To be denied opportunities to play sports, participate in extracurricular activities, or go on a school field trip.
- ✓ To live in congregate (or group home) care, with restrictions on everything from brushing your teeth to visiting your sister or brother.

Normalcy

And young people know that it is not normal:

- ✓ To have judges, caseworkers, attorneys, and others making major decisions about your life without talking with you or really knowing who you are.
- ✓ To languish in foster care year after year, moving from placement to placement, school to school.
- ✓ To suddenly be on your own at age 18, 19, or 20 and expected to live independently.

Normalcy

What do we want for our own kids?

Young people in foster care know that most of us "adults" wouldn't allow our children to experience any of the above.



Activity: How Many Bottles?



What We Focus On Grows!

- We should focus on the “branches” and not the “bottles”
- Ignoring the “branches” could affect normal development
- Providing opportunities for normalcy keeps the focus on their personal growth

Normalcy

- Normalcy helps build life skills.
- Brain research supports the theory that normal adolescent experiences are necessary for development.
- Normal experiences help youth develop social capital.
- Normalcy can help youth build skills to overcome the effects of trauma.

Create Normalcy by...

- Developing a “Normalcy Plan”- Do not assume that youth will naturally fall into school activities or develop friendships; make a plan.
- Involve the youth - Do not make a plan or insert a youth into activities without discussing them first.
- Work together with all partners and providers – Do not try to do this alone. You are part of a team!



Protocol for Reasonable & Prudent Parenting

- The reasonable and prudent parent standard is characterized by careful and thoughtful, parental decision-making that is intended to maintain a child's health, safety and best interest while encouraging the child's emotional, developmental and academic growth. This will generally be impacted by the child's length of stay in the placement and the foster parent understanding of the child's strengths and needs.



Don't say "NO" before you "KNOW."

Eight Factors you should KNOW when considering use of the prudent parent standards:

1. The overall age, maturity and developmental level of the child
2. The potential risk and appropriateness of the activity
3. The best interest of the child
4. The importance or impact on the child's growth

Don't say "NO" before you "KNOW."

Eight Factors you should KNOW when considering use of the prudent parent standards:

5. The relevance to a family-like experience
6. The behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child and any safety plans
7. The wishes and interests of the youth
8. How the experience for the youth might impact the foster family as a whole

Other Factors to Consider

Foster Parents Will:

- ✓ be expected to assist in the healthy development of children/youth in care through implementing “reasonable and prudent parent “decision making that supports health, safety and best interest of the child.
- ✓ communicate with the birth family, within the communication plan agreed upon by the team.
- ✓ provide a nurturing environment that encourages emotional and developmental growth and provides the most family-like setting experience as possible.

Other Factors to Consider

Foster Parents Will:

- ✓ provide a nurturing, supportive and non-discriminatory environment for youth, but are encouraged to seek support, such as a Child and Family Meeting (CFTM), when they need assistance in doing so.
- ✓ build supports within their families, friends and community networks to support growth opportunities for the children/youth in care..
- ✓ build and promote protective factors in reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect that include:

Other Factors to Consider

Foster Parents Will:

- ✓ build and promote protective factors in reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect that include:
 - Youth Resilience
 - Social Connection
 - Knowledge of child and adolescent development
 - Child's Social and Emotional Competence
 - Concrete supports in times of need



Promoting Normalcy...

Encourage the child/youth, dependent upon his/her age and maturity level, to engage in appropriate activities such as social and extracurricular events, service/learning or volunteering, vocational opportunities or employment, contact with family members, and prudent phone use.



Promoting Normalcy...

Understand that criminal background checks, delinquency and abuse/neglect history checks may not be necessary for dating, outings, activities with friends, families, church groups or other normal school or community activities. Foster Parents should use their best judgment (defined as “**would you leave your biological child with this person?**”) when determining if an individual is an appropriate supervisor for the child/youth. Contact the FSW or other team members when there are questions about allowable activities at any time.

**DCS cannot pay an individual for providing supervision or care for a custodial child for the purpose of an outing/overnight stay*

Promoting Normalcy...

Any out of state, out of country or continuous travel is discussed. When traveling outside the United States the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and the court/judge must be notified. Use form **CS-0679 Authorization DCS Child to Travel out of State/country**, as appropriate.



Promoting Normalcy...

DCS is to be notified when any activities take the child out of the foster home for forty-eight (48) hours or more; this includes respite and allowable travel. Contact the FSW or other team members when there are questions about allowable activities when traveling out of state or out of the country. Foster parents are required to complete form **CS-0679** quarterly when taking routine trips right over the state lines (grocery shopping, or recreation).



Promoting Normalcy...

Establish reasonable, age appropriate boundaries and curfews and encourage respect for boundaries and curfews. Child/youth understands the parental expectations regarding curfew.



Promoting Normalcy...

Refrain from the use of terminology such as “foster child”, “Level 2 child”, “Level 3 child” and “group home child” outside of the team setting. **Ask the child/youth what they want to be called.**



Promoting Normalcy...

- School is identified as a safe place, therefore limit professional visits to the school unless it's an emergency or a necessary educational meeting, to avoid stigma.
- DCS and partners should strive to promote less academic interference by attempting to schedule court appearances and/or CFTM's that are conducive to the youth's academic schedule.
- Parent involvement is encouraged and can be defined as the active, ongoing participation of a Foster Parent in the education of his or her child. Parents can demonstrate involvement at home by reading with their children, helping with homework, and discussing school events or at school by attending functions or volunteering in classrooms.

Promoting Normalcy...

Allow participation in appropriate computer or electronic activities, including cell phones usage and social media with the permission or supervision of foster parents.



Promoting Normalcy...

Ensure allocation of age appropriate allowances and encourage appropriate money management.



Promoting Normalcy...

Look for opportunities to teach independence, starting in childhood. Giving choices, encouraging (reasonable) risk-taking and allowing a child to make mistakes are all ways that parents build the skills that make independence possible.



Promoting Normalcy...

Avoid the use of confidentiality requirements of department records to restrict the child's participation in customary activities appropriate for the child's age and developmental level. For example, encourage pictures taken for publication in a newspaper or yearbook or for purposes of public recognition for or being part of a team or accomplishments if not identified as a foster child. Ask the child what they want.



Promoting Normalcy...

Afford the child/youth opportunities for social and recreational development that are normal life experiences. The child/youth may attend overnight or planned activities if the activity is determined by the licensed foster home to be safe and appropriate. The foster parent will have knowledge of where and with whom the child is staying and the type of supervision and care the child will be receiving before approving an outing or overnight activity.



Promoting Normalcy...

Youth 16 and older should have the opportunity to obtain driver's training and a license, when appropriate. Please refer to [*Driver's License Guide*](#).



Promoting Normalcy...

DCS may utilize delegated purchase authority (DPA) and Independent Living Wrap Around Funding to support pro-social and extracurricular activities for all ages. (Refer to the *Independent Living Wraparound Services Grid* for eligibility and funded activities). This is not limited to just school activities. Consider use of TFACA Walk Me Home Funding or Community Advisory Boards (CABS) for assistance.

Promoting Normalcy...

Positive reinforcement for children is encouraged and FSW's and child placing providers should use Independent Living Wrap Around good grades incentives as rewards for good grades for youth 14 and older.



Additional Tools

a) [Independent Living Youth Handbook](http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/independent-living-youth-handbook)

<http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/independent-living-youth-handbook>

b) [A Guide for Youth in Foster Care](http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/a-guide-for-teens-in-foster-care)

<http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/a-guide-for-teens-in-foster-care>

Scenario #1

- **Spending the Night:** Your 10-year-old foster daughter, Tessa, has lived with you for 6 months. She has no behavioral problems in your home and does well in school. Tessa has been invited to spend the night at her friend's house tonight. Tessa occasionally wets the bed but has not had an accident in the last three months. She also has a history of night terrors but this has not occurred since being placed with you. You have known the friend's parents for years. They go to your church and you see them regularly, but you have never actually been to their home. Will you allow Tessa to spend the night?

Scenario#2

- **Dating:** Brooke is a junior in high school, and has been living in your home for 4 months. She has adjusted well in your home and is basically a quiet and easy-going girl. Her grades are good, all A's and B's, and she has had no problems at school. In the last few days, a boy has been coming over to your house to see Brooke. He is a 17 year old senior, and has had his driver's license for over a year. He seems nice and has been polite to you, but you really don't know him or his family. Brooke, who will be 17 next month, has asked permission to go out alone with this boy on Saturday night. They want to go to a movie and then just "hang out". Should you allow Brooke to go out alone with this boy?

Scenario#3

- **Party with ATV/Trampoline/Pond:** Your 12-year-old foster son, TJ, has been in your home for over a year. He gets along well in your family and, if permanent custody is granted as anticipated, your family is hoping to adopt TJ. He is happy and well-adjusted and has lots of friends at school. TJ has been invited to a big outdoor party at a friend's house to celebrate the end of the school year. His friend's family has a large property with a trampoline, 3 ATVs, and a lake for fishing and swimming. TJ is begging you to let him go to the party. He says that all of his friends will be there and he is assuring you that the party will be well supervised. Can you allow TJ to go to this party?

Considerations:

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level		
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity		
Best interest of the child		
Importance or impact on the child's growth		
Relevance to a family-like experience		
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child		
Wishes and interests of the youth		
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole		
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

Contact

Michael Leach- Director of IL

615-253-3503

Michael.h.leach@tn.gov

Have a question? Call: 844-887-7277

<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/section/youth-in-transition>

Thank you!





®

Thank You