

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Philosophical Statement on Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

Background and Intent

Federal law seeks to improve the opportunities for children in foster care and support permanency by supporting normalcy for foster children. To that end, federal law requires that child welfare agencies provide for the wellbeing of foster children by implementing the “reasonable and prudent parenting standard”¹. The District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) is committed to the system-wide implementation of a reasonable and prudent parenting standard to support the healthy development and well-being of all children and youth in foster care.

Every day, resource parents and congregate care staff who provide out-of-home care for District children and youth must make important decisions about their participation in age and developmentally appropriate extracurricular, social, cultural, and enrichment activities. Participation in these activities is important to a child’s physical and emotional development and overall well-being. Resource parents and congregate care staff must be empowered through the application of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard to make decisions, without needing prior Agency approval, which maximize the child’s exposure to these activities and allow him or her to capitalize on the opportunities to participate in these activities.

CFSA is committed to empowering caretakers of children and youth in foster care to make parental decisions that promote normalcy by exposing them to opportunities to participate in developmentally appropriate activities, and that support their health, well-being, development, and happiness.

Definitions

The **‘reasonable and prudent parent standard’** is a standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a resource parent or congregate care staff person shall use when determining whether to allow the child/youth to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

The term **‘age or developmentally-appropriate’** means—

- a. activities or items that are generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally-appropriate for a child, based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group; and,

¹ The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-183).

- b. in the case of a specific child, activities or items that are suitable for the child based on the developmental stages attained by the child with respect to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of the child.

The term **‘resource parent’** means a person with whom the child is placed in out-of-home care.

The term **‘congregate care staff person’** means a staff member of a group care facility licensed by CFSA who is designated to apply the reasonable and prudent parenting standard for children/youth in the facility.

Requirements for Resource Parent Decision-Making

Every child who comes into the care and custody of CFSA is entitled to participate in age and developmentally appropriate extracurricular, cultural, enrichment, and social activities.

In determining whether to give permission to the children and youth in their care to participate in such activities, including sports, field trips, and overnight activities lasting one or more days, and activities that involve the signing of permission slips and arranging transportation to attend, resource parents and congregate care staff persons are expected utilize a reasonable and prudent parenting standard through which they consider:

- The child’s best interest, based on their own understanding of his/her needs.
- The child’s age, maturity, and developmental level.
- The potential risk of the child’s participation in the activity.
- The child’s behavioral history to discern whether he/she can safely participate in the activity under consideration.
- The importance of promoting normalcy for the child in a nurturing and family-like setting that fosters his/her emotional and developmental growth.
- To the extent appropriate and practicable, the input of the child’s parent, who should be included in decision-making whenever possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

I acknowledge that I have received the CFSA Philosophical Statement on Reasonable and Prudent Parenting. I also understand that I am responsible for reviewing this statement and implementing the reasonable and prudent parenting standard in my home.

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| Resource Parent Name (Please Print) | Resource Parent Signature | Date |
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| Resource Parent Name (Please Print) | Resource Parent Signature | Date |