

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(14) Resource Development	Effective Date:	September 2015
	Policy Title:	Supervision of Children		
	Policy Number:	14.18	Previous Policy #:	14.18

CODES/REFERENCES

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

REQUIREMENTS

Caregivers shall ensure that safe and appropriate supervision is provided for each child in DFCS custody that has been placed under their care and oversight.

Caregivers shall apply the reasonable and prudent parenting standard (see policy [14.26 Resource Development: Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard](#)) when allowing children in foster care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

1. Caregivers shall make reasonable and prudent decisions in assessing the appropriateness of the activities and approving the plan of supervision before youth participate in activities during which the youth will not be under the direct supervision or oversight of their approved foster care provider, DFCS staff, or DFCS authorized provider.
2. Caregivers must be reasonably assured that any substitute caregivers possess the necessary skills to manage the parenting and/or special needs of the children left in their care and that the substitute caregivers will follow DFCS guidelines regarding supervision, discipline, and other safety practices.

Children in DFCS custody shall not be left in the care of other minors. Substitute caregivers (i.e., babysitters) must be at least 18 years of age or older.

DFCS shall screen routine substitute caregivers providing routine care by checking the following databases: DFCS Protective Services Records (Georgia SHINES, IDS Online Master Index, PSDS, and County Master Files), the Sexual Offender’s Registry, the Board of Pardons and Parole, and the Department of Corrections. Routine care means care provided more than once a week, usually at designated times.

Caregivers must make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions when determining whether to allow youth 14 years of age and older to be left under their own supervision for short periods of time (e.g., an hour after school or when foster parents are attending to short-term personal matters).

DFCS shall provide paid respite care as a support service for caregivers who need time away from their parenting responsibilities.

- a. Caregivers may receive 10 days per fiscal year (taken individually or consecutively).
- b. Paid, overnight respite may only be provided by an approved foster parent.
- c. Foster homes providing respite must continue to meet all DFCS safety and quality standards, including standards related to appropriate utilization of a foster home.
- d. Foster homes providing respite may not exceed their approved capacity without a waiver from the applicable DFCS County Director or CPA Director.

Caregivers shall notify DFCS when children placed under their care and oversight are absent without permission or run away (see policies [10.24 Foster Care: Missing Children](#) and [10.25 Foster Care: Youth Absent Without Permission](#)).

PROCEDURES

When it becomes necessary to utilize substitute caregivers, the approved DFCS caregiver or Child Placing Agency (CPA) family will:

1. Provide or arrange for care and supervision appropriate to the child's age, level of development, and individual needs.
2. Leave no child in DFCS custody under the supervision and care of other minors.

The County DFCS office or CPA will:

1. Maintain open communication with approved caregivers regarding the use of substitute caregivers and respite.
2. Explain the reasonable and prudent parenting standard to all approved caregivers and the safety concerns related to improper or inadequate supervision of children placed in their homes (see policy [14.26 Resource Development: Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard](#)).
3. Make a CPS referral when there are identified safety threats to a child as a result of improper or inadequate supervision (see policy [14.21 Resource Development: Reporting Allegations of Abuse and Neglect in Approved Homes](#)).
4. Implement a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) when there are concerns regarding the level of supervision in foster homes, but the concerns do not rise to a level that requires children to be moved.
5. Complete the appropriate background screening on substitute caregivers who provide routine care. In addition, complete and upload the Child Safety Agreement and Unreimbursed Substitute In-Home/Out-of-Home Caregivers form into External Documents of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Georgia SHINES)

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Due to their unique needs, children in foster care placement require the ongoing care and supervision of caregivers who have undergone preparation and training adequate to meet their needs. Inherent in the process of "becoming" a caregiver is the understanding of the impact this experience will have on the life of the child and of the caregiver's family. Nevertheless, there will be times when foster parents may need a substitute caregiver (i.e., babysitter) to supervise the children in their absence. Foster parents as well as DFCS must be reasonably assured that any substitute caregiver the foster parent decides to use possesses the necessary skills to manage the parenting needs of the child left in their care. Foster parents are not reimbursed for the expenses they incur for babysitters. Routine unreimbursed caregivers are to complete the Unreimbursed Substitute In-Home/Out-of-

Home Caregivers form indicating their agreement to follow supervision, safety, and discipline standards as outlined in the Caregiver Child Safety Agreement and as instructed by the foster parent. The completion of the Unreimbursed Substitute In-Home/Out-of-Home Caregivers form also serves as confirmation that DFCS completed the appropriate safety screening on the substitute caregiver.

Safe Supervision

The Child Protective Services (CPS) standards regarding the supervision of children in the homes of their parents are not applicable to children in foster care placement. Standards of care for children in foster care are more stringent due to the uniqueness of their situation, past experiences, and the need to ensure their safety in out-of-home placements.

Supervision of Older Youth

Generally speaking, reliable and competent youth, 14 years and older, may be left under their own supervision under certain circumstances and for short periods of time so as not to jeopardize their safety and well-being. At this stage in their lives, many youth are able to benefit from experiences that foster a sense of responsibility, independence, and self-control. The primary factor to consider in determining if youth may be left alone is their level of maturity and ability to function in a safe, responsible manner for short periods of time without a caregiver present. Some factors that should be considered include the following:

- a. Length of time the youth has been in the placement setting;
- b. Youth's judgment and level of maturity or development;
- c. Youth's demonstration of dependability, responsibility, and trustworthiness;
- d. Youth's history of emotional/psychological stability;
- e. Whether the youth has a history with of running away and other status offenses;
- f. Whether the youth has a history of delinquent behavior;
- g. Youth's history of alcohol or other substance abuse;
- h. Number of youth present in the home, gender, and their relationship with each other;
- i. Whether the youth has a history of sexual acting out;
- j. Youth's school performance;
- k. Safety of the home environment (firearm safety, water safety, any other potential hazards, etc.); and
- l. Youth's ability to readily access their foster parent or other identified person should the need arise.

Respite Care

Respite for Family Foster Homes is a support service designed to allow foster parents time away from their parenting responsibilities. Children in DFCS approved foster homes and CPA foster homes are eligible for this service. It is designed to give foster parents a needed break from parenting for such purposes as vacation, hospitalization, or any other circumstance that makes the foster parent unable to provide for the child's care in the home. Respite is paid at the child's current per diem rate, **not to exceed 10 days per fiscal year** (taken individually or consecutively).

When determining the number of respite days to be applied, there should be a negotiation with the foster parent to clearly establish how the days will be counted. The rule of thumb is that if a child sleeps at the respite home, it counts as a respite day (AKA head in the bed rule). Circumstances may vary, so it is important for DFCS to negotiate the number of respite

days to be applied with each foster parent involved. This will help prevent conflict between any of the parties after respite services have been provided.

Respite Care (Under Concurrent Per Diem)

There are circumstances under which respite may also be used to support foster parent attendance at approved conferences when overnight or extended care may be needed. When a foster parent's attendance at an approved conference is overnight or extended care is needed, the foster parent's respite balance is not impacted. Consult with the office of the Foster Care Services Director as needed regarding these situations.

Respite between County DFCS Homes and CPA Homes

Use of family foster homes between CPAs or between CPA and DFCS family foster homes are permissible, but it should be done in consultation with the DFCS Foster Care Services Director who will be able to assist with trouble shooting payment or Residential Child Care (RCC) rules.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Caregiver Child Safety Agreement](#)

[Unreimbursed Substitute In-Home/Out-of-Home Caregivers](#)

[Unreimbursed Substitute In-Home/Out-of-Home Caregivers - Instructions](#)