

POLICY ON RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION, SOCIALIZATION AND EDUCATION BY CHILDREN IN OUT OF HOME CARE

RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

Every foster child has the right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion. An agency, and its foster caregivers, shall be considerate of, and sensitive to, the religious backgrounds of all children in out-of-home care and of all families receiving services. Consequently, Trumbull County Children Services and its foster caregivers shall provide opportunities and encouragement for each foster child in out-of-home care to practice his/her chosen religious faith or that of his/her parents, including dietary restriction due to beliefs, unless it is documented in the case plan to be contrary to the child's best interests. Foster caregivers shall not subject the foster child to any form of religious coercion. Religious coercion may include, but is not limited to, being required to accompany the foster parent or other residents of the foster home to religious services but allowed to sit outside the area where the service actually occurs; being given extra chores to perform or being required to read or listen to specific materials while others attend religious services; or being required to view or listen to specific religiously oriented television, video tapes or music.

In further addressing the Agency's policies, in reference to the foster child's religious tenets or practices, concerning the foster child's non-emergency and emergency medical treatment and baptism, the following stipulations must be adhered to:

1. The Agency shall not require a child in an out-of-home care setting to receive non-emergency medical treatment which conflicts with the religious tenets or practices of the religion of the foster child or parent without the specific written consent of the parent, guardian or custodian.
2. When a child in an out-of-home care setting requires emergency medical treatment and such treatment conflicts with the religious tenets or practices of the foster child, parent, guardian or custodian, the out-of-home care setting shall immediately transport or arrange for the transportation of the child to a medical facility and contact the custodial agency or individual which placed the child.
3. A foster child shall not be baptized or submitted to any religious procedures without prior consent of the child according to his/her age and functioning level and prior approval of the foster child's parent, guardian or custodian.

EDUCATION FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

1. Enrollment

Generally, the caseworker enrolls the foster child into school. However, in some schools, the foster caregiver is allowed to enroll the foster child. If you, as the foster caregiver, enroll the foster child, the caseworker will provide any documentation that the school may want (e.g. a copy of the legal journal entry verifying that the agency has custody, a copy of the birth certificate, etc.). Also, it is important to note that the "Emergency Medical Form" is to be completed by the child's caseworker and that only the Executive Director of the Agency is permitted to sign the completed form. The child will be enrolled in a school which complies with the minimum standards as prescribed by the State Board of Education, and

the foster caregiver shall ensure that the child attends school in accordance with the childcare agreement. Foster caregivers are not permitted to home school foster children.

2. Foster Parent Involvement

Given the educational and social needs of foster children, it is very important that foster caregivers attend:

- a. All parent-teacher conferences for the foster child.
- b. The I.E.P. (Individualized Educational Plan) conferences for your foster child if he/she is in a special education program.
- c. Performances in which your foster child is involved (e.g. choir, band, school play, Christmas programs, etc.).
- d. Any awards ceremonies in which your foster child is involved.

3. Family Visitation During School Hours

Every effort is made so that visitations don't interfere with the normal school day. However, occasions arise when children must be removed from school. When this occurs, the following procedures are to be used:

- a. The child's caseworker will notify the school in writing to inform them that visits will be taking place. The visitation schedule is enclosed with this letter.
- b. The foster caregiver should send a note to the school with the child on the day of the visit.

4. Free Lunches

Most foster children are eligible for free lunches. The foster caregiver is responsible to complete the school's application form for free lunches for the child. Please note that you only need to complete the information about the foster child. You do not need to complete personal information about yourself such as social security number, income, etc.

5. School Fees and Reimbursements

The Agency provides financial assistance for the following:

- a. Senior Graduation Expense Allotment - \$800.00 maximum
- b. School Fees – any required school fee for coursework
- c. School/Other Pictures –\$25.00 per child, per year
- d. Extracurricular Activities - \$150.00 maximum (expenses over \$150.00 per year will be subject to review on a case by case basis)

SOCIALIZATION FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

A foster caregiver shall encourage a foster child to participate in the following activities as appropriate to the child's age and functioning level:

1. Community
2. School
3. Recreation
4. Cultural Heritage

A foster caregiver shall, as is necessary and reasonable, arrange appropriate transportation for the foster child to and from the activities. During Family-to-Family meetings and other contacts, the foster parent and child's caseworker will consult with the child's parent, guardian or custodian to make available to the child cultural or ethnic activities appropriate to the child's cultural or national origin.

The foster caregiver shall allow privileges and assign responsibilities to a child similar to those which would be assigned to a family member of the caregiver who is of similar age and functioning level.

The foster caregiver will teach a child tasks and skills required for life in the community. The foster caregiver will utilize TCCSB's Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard when considering whether to authorize a foster child in their home to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities. TCCSB's Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Policy can be referenced in this manual. Foster caregivers will give the Agency a minimum of 30 days notice when requesting the removal of a foster child from your home.

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