



CREATING NORMALCY THROUGH PRUDENT PARENTING

Facilitator Guide | 2016

Before the Training:

Before class begins, make copies of these quotes on colorful cardstock, cut them out and have them placed on the tables before participants arrive. Explain to them during the introduction that when the slide titled **“From the Youth”** appears, a volunteer from the class will randomly select a quote card and read it aloud. Ask the group how they could have been taught that skill before leaving care. Allow only one or two comments.

<p>Teach me about healthy relationships instead of keeping me away from relationships.</p>	<p>Introduce me by name and not the "f" word (foster kid)</p>
<p>“If the government or those who are in power want to make the foster care system better, what they should do is just ask a foster kid. Talk to one of them. They can tell you exactly what they need. What they need is what most children and even teens need...Someone who cares about them, someone who will listen to them and hold them when they are scared. What they need is what any child needs...a family who loves them.” - Luis</p>	<p>“They were like, ‘You’re 16. You’re going to go off to college in a couple of years, why do you want a family?’ It’s about my entire life, it’s not just about my childhood. I want to know that I’m going to have a place to come home to during Christmas breaks. I want to know that I’m going to have a dad to walk me down the aisle. That I’m going to have grandparent for my children.” MARY, Former foster youth, Tennessee</p>
<p>“I wish I had someone with me, you know, like a mentor, for my entire life. I mean, I’m fine with all the changes in my social worker but ... I never really met someone in the system or someone, a mentor, that was with me my entire life.” - Former foster youth</p>	<p>“When you have a family, you have everything. You are lucky to have parents and you should always remember that. When I won the Youth Spirit Award, it was exciting. And I have won many awards and things at school, too. But every time I walked up to receive my award, there was no family there to see me get it. Other kids had a mom or a dad to watch them get their award. It should have been a happy occasion. But for me ... I wish I had a family there for me.” - ANNA MARIA, former foster youth, Connecticut</p>

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I don't want to be a burden or feel like I'm a burden.	It's not the foster parent's obligation to fix me.
I want the freedom of self.	Normal is having healthy routine with people that support you. Normal is knowing no matter what you do, there is a wall of support waiting to catch you before you fall. - Adrianna
I didn't ask to be in foster care.	How are young people in foster care expected to feel normal as adults if we have been treated abnormally all of our lives? - Crystal
One of my foster moms had adult children with kids. After multiple months of living with this foster mom, one of her kids called me and asked me to babysit her two girls and said she would pay me. I could hardly believe it. That was the moment where I really felt connected to the family, because of the obvious trust and that I was thought of before anyone else. - Kayla	Don't try to change my cultural beliefs or take on yours.
Let me get my driver's license.	Let me take some risks.
Allow me to participate in activities even with my disabilities.	Ask me what I think about the situation, before deciding for me.
I want to travel out of state on the school trip.	Teach me life skills and show me how to navigate the world.

Activity #1: Definitions of the Law

Time: 30 minutes

Objectives

Participants 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

Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint
- Projector
- Flipchart/Markers
- Large drawing of tree (prepared before class)

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **Welcome** participants to the training. Start on time and share housekeeping details with participants including the location of restrooms, break times, smoking areas, etc. Ask participants to make a name tent, folding card stock page in half, and write their name on both sides in large letters.

TRAINERS NOTE: *The language used in this curriculum refers to the term “youth” instead of stating children/youth each time. This can be misinterpreted as meaning only older children. Please share with the group that the terms “youth,” “child,” and “children,” are referring to ALL AGES of children in foster care.*

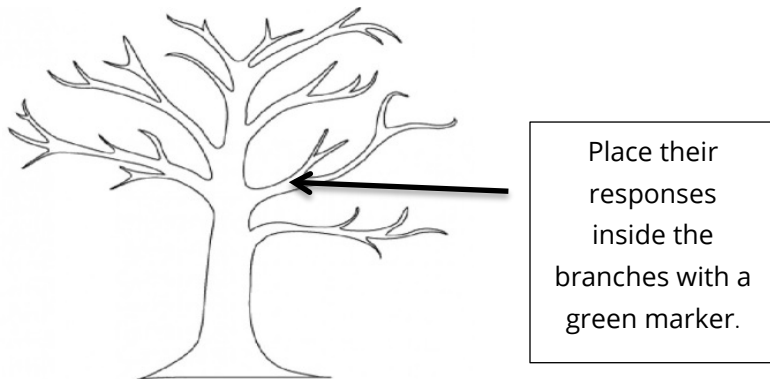
2. **Share Ground Rules**/and:
 - Be on time
 - Please turn off cell phones
 - Please hold calls until break

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- Actively participate
- Return from breaks on time
- Avoid disturbing others
- Avoid performing activities other than training
- Have fun!

Expectations:

- Be Responsible for your own learning
 - Have Enjoyment of opportunity
 - Be Sensitive to each other's needs and diversity
 - Know Professionals are professional in their conduct
 - Embrace Education as a continuous process that requires effort
 - Cherish Commitment to personal growth and development
 - Acknowledge Time management is personal management
3. **Introduce** yourself to the group and share information about your previous experiences working with children and families from the child welfare system. Using a green marker, add your own answer to "one normal activity in which you participated as a youth" on the prepared tree to show what you want them to do when they introduce themselves.
4. **Ask** participants to introduce themselves by sharing:
- Their name
 - One normal activity in which they participated as a youth (flipchart responses, using a green marker, on tree branches)
 - NOTE: Before class begins, prepare a flipchart with tree drawn as shown below. Allow space in the branches to write their responses.



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5. **Review** training Objectives Slide:
 - 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
6. **Explain** that there are cards located on each table, and that every time the slide says “**From the Youth,**” someone read one of the cards aloud. Have someone read a card at this time and briefly discuss.
7. **Share** that this course was developed after the “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act” (HR 4980) was signed into law on September 29, 2014.
 - 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.
 - It is important for youth to be exposed to experiences that create opportunities to learn how to effectively manage stress, regulate emotions and develop the social, behavioral and cognitive coping skills needed to overcome obstacles throughout the course of their life (Gunner et al., (2009).
8. **Ask** the audience “What does the word ‘normalcy’ mean?” After allowing some discussion, reference the slide with the definition. 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.
9. **State** that this law was established after hearing reports from foster youth who stated that they wanted a “normal” life like other children their age. Gary Stangler, Jim Casey Foundation, wrote the following article first seen in the Huffington Post:

At the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, we have the great privilege of working side by side with young people who have been in foster care. We have all heard young people say that they just wanted to be "normal" while they were in foster care. Establishing "normalcy" means that they get to do what their friends do, that they have a chance to pursue their interests and build dreams for their future and, most importantly, that they have a family who cares about them, just like their friends.

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,*
- ✓ *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, or*
- ✓ *To suddenly be on your own at age 18, 19, or 20 and expected to live independently.*

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.

10. **Explain** that along with other states, the state of Tennessee developed the Protocol for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting as a supplement to DCS policies 16.3 and 16.8 relating to Characteristics and Responsibilities of Foster Parents. The protocol intends to promote "normalcy" for our foster children while they are in care, which will be discussed later in the material.
11. **Explain** that there are cards located on each table, and that every time the slide says "**From the Youth,**" someone read one of the cards aloud. If time permits, read more than one and discuss.
12. **Share** that in the next activity, we will look at the importance of normalcy.

Activity #2: The Importance of Normalcy

Time: 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Projector
- PowerPoint
- Flipchart Paper
- Markers
- Colorful bottles cut out for each person in the small group to have at least one bottle, but preferably more.

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **Conduct** the “How Many Bottles” Icebreaker by explaining the audience that you are going to show a slide of a tree with bottles and you want them to see if they can count all of them before the slide goes dark. Give them 10 Seconds then block the slide. Ask if anyone wants to share their number with the group. (at least 26) Once a few people have guessed, ask the group to tell you how many branches were on that tree. They of course will not be able to tell you how many branches because they weren’t focused on the branches.
2. **Divide** the class into small groups and provided each group with blank color paper or cardstock in the shape of bottles. Ask the small groups to brainstorm what the focus becomes when a foster child enters care and place that on a bottle (i.e. counseling, CFTM, court...) *****Take the tree used in the first activity, outside of the room, and spray with adhesive spray. Place the tree back in the room. Have the small groups place their bottles on the tree limbs as they complete the activity.***
3. **Discuss** a few of the bottles placed on the posters, and then point out that **“What We Focus on Grows”** share that when youth come into care, the main focus tends to be on the details of why they came into care and the services that will now be placed around them to work through the trauma. Often, so much time is spent on the situation that the child does not feel like a normal

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kid which can thwart positive growth for that child. It is vital to bring as much “normalcy” to a child as possible.

4. **Read** the excerpt from Marchelle Roberts whose statement from the Foster Youth Internship (FYI) Program was presented by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) during a congressional briefing.

We are so pleased to report that in addition to influencing the development of federal policies on education, housing and health care, the FYI alumni have succeeded in having three of their legislative proposals enacted into federal law. What follows is an excerpt from one report on the subject of normalcy.

“Youth who are raised in traditional family settings have both daily and lifelong access—even though they may not realize it—to life lessons and support systems that youth in care must acquire through local and federal services. Foster parents often view their responsibility as providing youth in their care with a safe and stable, but temporary, home. Because these homes are not viewed as permanent, often the foster youth will not be given the same responsibilities and privileges that children who live in permanent homes are afforded. Also, unlike their peers, foster youth are often unable to learn important life skills in their foster homes or group homes. For example, when I was in foster care, I did not receive an allowance for household chores. However, after I was adopted, I received an allowance, which provided me with my first experience in budgeting and saving money.”

5. **Process** this activity by asking the audience, “What are your thoughts about this excerpt?” and “What are our foster youth missing out on based on this statement?” Children born to us learn everyday how to navigate life just by watching what we do. Foster children are often moved from home to home and their lives become a revolving door of waiting and hoping for permanency. In the meantime, foster parents fail to see the child’s need for normalcy because of the overwhelming tasks involved in just caring for a foster child.
6. **Ask** “Why does normalcy matter to foster youth?” After a short discussion, review the following four reasons normalcy is important:

Normalcy helps build life skills.

- Life skills are learned through real life experiences, in the context of relationships (Strottman, K., 2013). ****Refer to NRCYD handout.**
- When youth placed in foster care are denied the chance to participate in these life experiences, they can be unprepared for adulthood. And, if they age out of the system without permanency, they have no one to support or help them as they build life skills.
- Consequently, these youth face worse life outcomes than their peers, including homelessness, unemployment, and poverty (Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A, Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V., 2011).
- Youth will test boundaries and break rules. That is how they learn the importance of making good choices (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2013).

Brain research supports the theory that normal adolescent experiences are necessary for development.

- There is actually a physiological change in the brain that makes adolescents desire to take on more adult roles (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011; Center on the Developing Child).
- Not providing opportunity to take on these adult roles can hinder brain development.
- In adolescence, the logic part of the brain, the cortex, is still developing. The emotion part of the brain is more fully developed. This can lead to youth knowing what to do, but not being able to overcome the “emotional rewards” of making the “wrong” choice (e.g., peer acceptance, excitement).
- Having a caring adult there to help the youth think through the wrong choice and what he could do differently next time helps build the logic part of the brain and helps the youth gain control over his emotions.

Normal experiences help youth develop social capital.

- Social capital is the youth’s “diverse social networks comprised of quality relationships.” (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2012).

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- The trauma and loss foster youth have experienced often lead to trust and attachment issues.
- These youth need “normalcy” so that they can practice forming positive relationships and build their social capital (Pokempner, J., Mordecai, K, Rosado, L, Subrahmanyam, D., 2015; Russ, E., and Fryar, G, 2014; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2012).

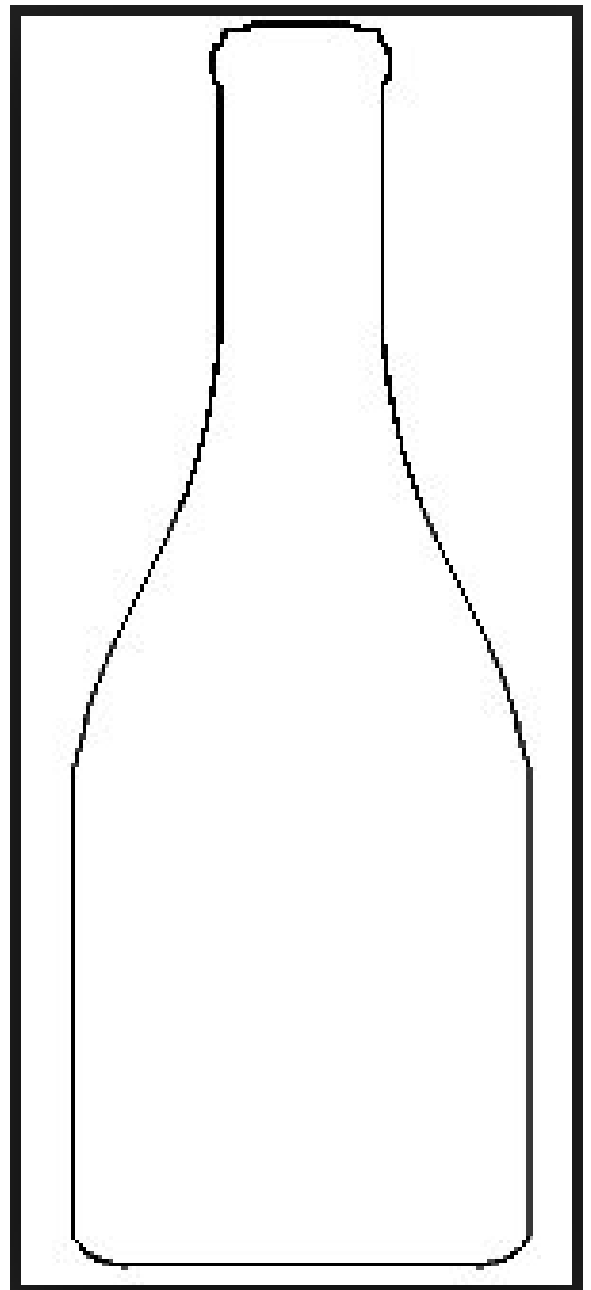
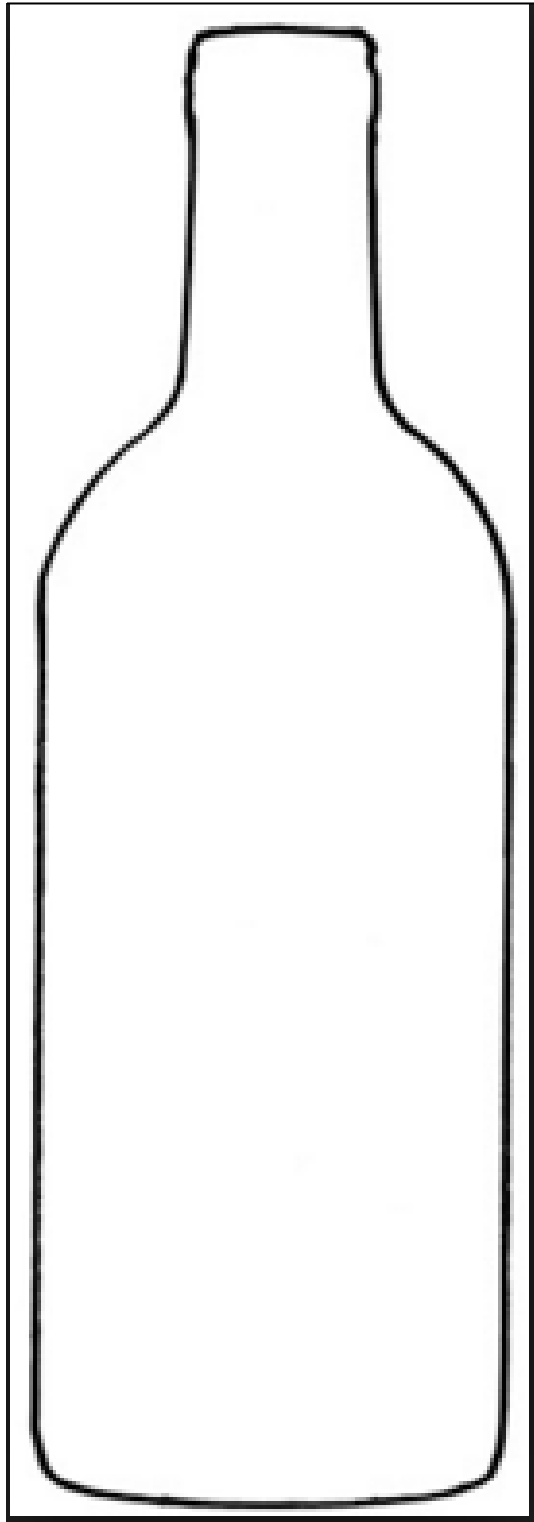
Normalcy can help youth build skills to overcome the effects of trauma.

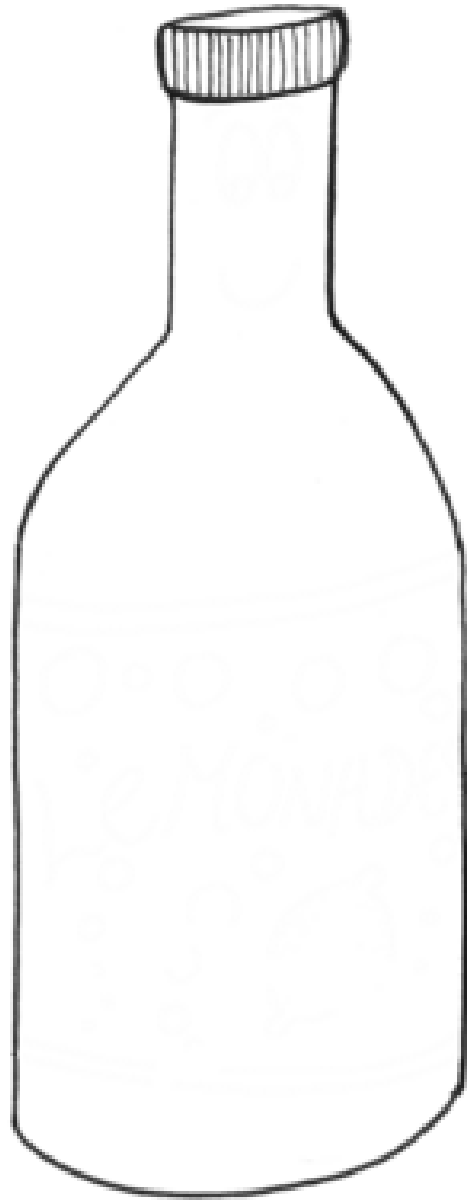
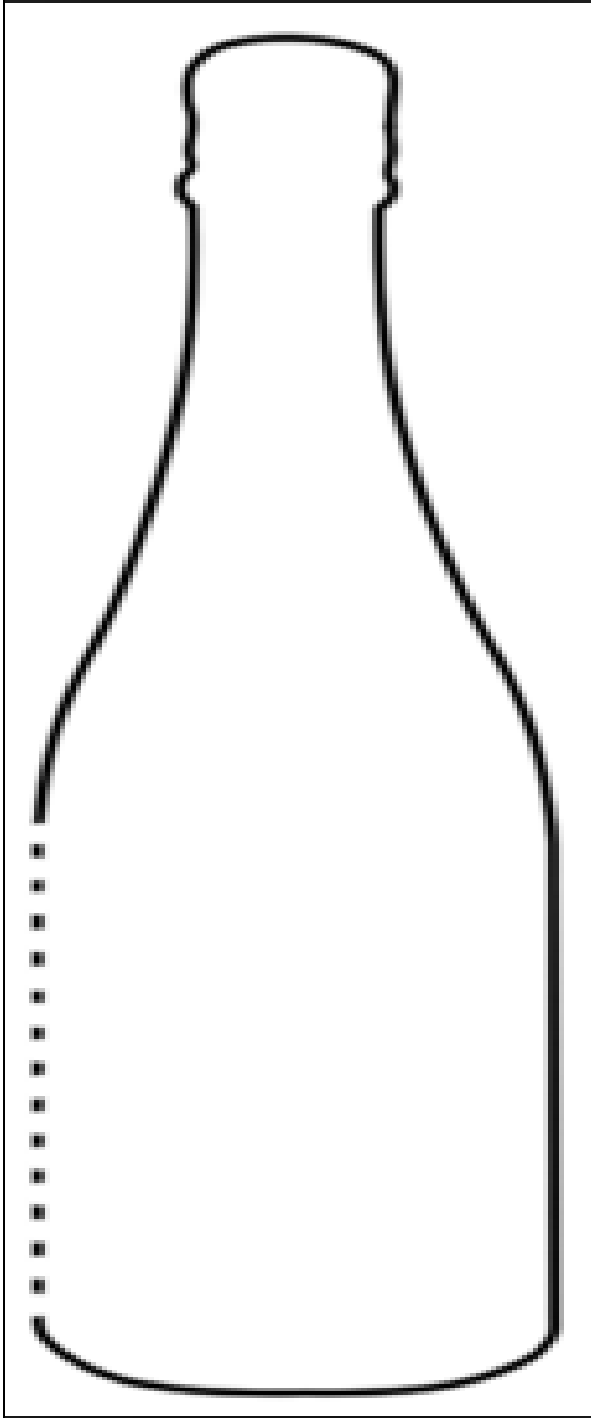
- The Center for the Study of Social Policy (2014) encourages states to acknowledge that most youth in care have experienced trauma. They need normalcy to help them combat the effects of trauma. Activities aren't just for social growth, but they enhance well-being.
- Helping children establish routines and roles can help create normalcy in a child's life, providing reassurance and a sense of safety. Regular mealtimes and bedtimes, participating in school activities, developing friendships and playing in a safe environment can all help heal trauma.

7. **Discuss** that along with youth having normalcy in their lives, it is also important to:

- Develop a Normalcy Plan (Why is important to develop a Normalcy Plan for their activities)
- Involve the youth in development and on-going needs (Why is important to have the Youth involved in the staffing, court hearings and plan development)
- Collaborate between partners and providers (Why do we need to include everyone in Normalcy)

Training Aid 1





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National Resource Center for Youth Development

Life Skills Training Tips for Caregivers

Learning life skills is an important task of childhood and adolescence. Life skills generally fall into two categories—tangible skills like job hunting, cooking, cleaning, and budgeting and intangible skills like decision-making, communication, and relationship building. Everyone needs both sets of skills.

When young people learn to cook a meal, change a tire, or manage a bank account, they are also learning how to plan, problem-solve, and make decisions. These are the skills they need to learn on the way to adulthood. Young people benefit when you share your knowledge and provide life skills practice opportunities. When youths' knowledge and ability increases, so does their self-esteem.

When do I start? Learning life skills starts at a very young age. Some people say it starts at birth. The learning process begins when you first come in contact with a youth, regardless of his/her age.

Where do I start? Find something that the youth you are working with is interested in learning about, like cooking or decorating. Or, select a goal that the youth would like to pursue like saving for a video game. Through conversation or observation, assess how much the youth already knows about the skills involved.

How do I teach? Think of teaching as a two-part process. The first part involves imparting knowledge so the youth has an understanding of the skill; the second part involves practice, practice, and more practice.

What are intangible skills? Problem solving, planning, decision-making, time management, communication, and interpersonal relations are all examples of intangible skills. They are said to be intangible because they are less visible. These skills take longer to teach; they are harder to learn; and they are very important.

How do I teach intangible skills? These skills can be taught at the same time you are working on tangible skills like cooking, budgeting, or how to get a summer job. Cooking and budgeting both involve planning and decision-making. Use the same two-part process to teach these skills. Part one, share your knowledge about and techniques for planning and decision-making that you have learned; part two, provide the youth with opportunities to practice. When it is time to work on another skill like job-hunting, remind the youth what they have already learned about planning and decision-making and teach them strategies for communication and interpersonal relationships. Provide lots of opportunity for practice.

What if I am working with a youth who can't master a skill I have taught? Before you and the youth become frustrated, take some time to evaluate:

- **Does your youth need more practice?** Learning takes place over time. Very few life skills can be mastered in a single session.
- **Is the skill too complicated?** Some skills must be broken down into smaller, more manageable pieces. Make sure the learning is challenging but not overwhelming.
- **Do you need to change your teaching methods?** Not everyone learns the same way. Some people need to see things; some people need to hear things; some people experience things. Adjust your strategies and try again.

Baking a Cake

To bake a cake, you need to follow a recipe. Even a cake mix requires additional ingredients. Does the youth know how to measure ingredients, break eggs, use a mixer or food processor, prepare the pan, turn on the oven, and determine when the cake is done? These are all steps in the recipe.

Each step provides an opportunity for you to share your knowledge. Find opportunities for the youth to practice using what you have taught. "Here's how to break an egg, now you try."

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National Resource Center for Youth Development

What if I don't feel confident teaching a particular skill? You can always partner with someone in the community to teach the skills with which you are not comfortable.

You may also want to enroll the youth in programs that will help him/her develop new skills. Look at the programs available in your community through the park and recreation department, the arts council, and your local youth development programs. Support the youth's participation in after school activities and activities available through the local Department of Social Services.

Tips for Teaching

- Select a time to teach when you are not feeling rushed or pressured.
- Make learning fun.
- Look for "teachable moments"—opportunities that arise in everyday life to learn about or practice a skill.
- Don't make every moment a "teachable moment."
- Ask the youth to select the skills he/she wants to learn.
- Provide lots of opportunity to practice.
- Take the youth with you when you go grocery shopping or stop by the hardware store.
- Pay attention to how the youth likes to learn.
- Ask the youth to teach you a skill.
- Ask the youth to teach another child a skill.
- Open a bank account with the youth.
- Talk to others to get new and interesting ideas for teaching life skills.

Where can I find more information about teaching life skills? There are many free resources available on the Internet to help you teach and young people learn life skills. Look for your state's independent living program website or contact your state's independent living coordinator to learn about the resources that are available in your jurisdiction (www.nrcyd.ou.edu/state-pages). Visit the National Resource Center for Youth Development's Learning Center (www.nrcyd.ou.edu/learning-center) to find free publications, webinars, and digital stories. Check out Youth Port (www.nrcyd.ou.edu/youth-port), a web page designed just for youth.

Contact Us:

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Activity #3: Implementing the RPPS

Time: 20 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Projector
- PowerPoint
- Flipchart Paper
- Markers

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **Review** the Reasonable Prudent Parent Standard with the audience located in the power point and in their participant guide, which states: 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 and developmental 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. So foster parents should not say “No” before they “Know.”
2. **Explain** that to “know” means knowing policy/protocol and it especially means knowing these eight factors when considering the guidelines:
 - (1) **The overall age, maturity and developmental level of the child**
A child’s chronological age may not accurately reflect his emotional age. For example, the child may be 14, but a PG-13 movie may have content that child isn’t able to handle without behavioral issues or strong emotional responses
 - (2) **The potential risk and appropriateness of the activity**
Foster parents must think through all the potential risks involved in the activity, remembering that what might be a risk for one child, would not be so for another. For example, what is the risk difference in allowing a child to ride with a friend to school verses allowing him to ride with a friend to a late night concert?
 - (3) **The best interest of the child**

The activity should be selected because it will benefit the child. Foster parents may actually find themselves making sacrifices to ensure the youth can participate. For example, the sleep away camp was chosen because the foster daughter wants to hone her art skills, not because it gives the caregiver a “break.”

(4) The importance or impact on the child’s growth

Youth should be encouraged to participate in those activities which lead to greater growth. For example, the foster parent may need to weigh the potential growth related to being on the soccer team verses hanging out with friends each day after school.

(5) The relevance to a family-like experience

Foster parents should consider whether the activity is something they would let their birth or adopted children do. For example, is the only reason the foster youth isn’t staying the night with a friend the agency’s policy requiring fingerprinting?

(6) The behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child and any safety plans

Foster parent should consider if the youth can responsibly participate in the activity based on how the youth has behaved in similar circumstances. The caregiver may be more restrictive at first, and then allow more activities as trust is built. For example, a youth may not be able to stay out with friends until the caregiver has observed the youth around her friends several times.

(7) The wishes and interests of the youth

Youth should be encouraged to follow their interests and not just the interests of foster parents. For example, foster parents may feel the youth would do well at basketball, but the youth wants to pursue theatre instead.

(8) How the experience for the youth might impact the foster family as a whole

Foster parents are encouraged to create a plan for normalcy that includes the input of the foster youth as well as others living in the home in order to determine the impact the activity has on the family.

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3. **State** that in addition to knowing the eight factors just mentioned, there are other factors foster parents and caregivers must 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. These decisions can include opportunities for healthy risk-taking like those typically made by parents of children who are not in foster care. The protocol intends to promote “normalcy” and the ability to engage in healthy developmental appropriate activities that promote well-being for all youth in care. The reasonable and prudent parent standard should take into account that healthy risk taking is part of growing up.
 - Information regarding a child/youth’s activities will be regularly communicated with the birth family, within the communication plan agreed upon by the team.
 - Foster parents and caregivers will provide a nurturing environment that encourages emotional and developmental growth and provides the most family-like setting experience as possible.
 - Foster parents must 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.
 - Foster parents will build supports within their families, friends and community networks to support growth opportunities for the children/youth in care.
 - Foster parents will build and promote protective factors in reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect that include:
 - ✓ **Youth Resilience**- helping youth manage stress and enhance their ability to function well when faced with stressors, challenges, or adversity; the outcome is personal growth and positive change.
 - ✓ **Social Connection**- helping them have healthy, consistent relationships with people, institutions, the community, and empowered to make sound decisions.

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- ✓ **Knowledge of child** and adolescent development- understanding the unique aspects of their development
 - ✓ **Child's Social and Emotional Competence-** helping children develop skills and attitudes that help form an independent identity which ultimately prepares them for a productive, responsible, and satisfying adulthood.
 - ✓ **Concrete supports in times of need-** helping the youth understand the importance of asking for help and advocating for themselves.
4. **State** that the next activity will look at how to apply the standard with your children in care.

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Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Protocol for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

Supplemental to DCS Policy: 16.3, Desired Characteristics of Foster Parents and 16.8, Responsibilities of Approved Foster Homes

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (HR 4980) signed into law September 29, 2014, attempts to expand the opportunities for youth in foster care to participate in developmentally appropriate activities such as field trips, sleep overs and other extracurricular activities. These experiences allow youth to build skills, while developing talents, and healthy relationships with peers and supportive adults. New experiences and opportunities--even healthy risk taking--helps youth discover who they are and learn important decision making skills when they are supported by nurturing caregivers. 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.

*Caregiver is defined as a designated prudent parent in a congregate care facility.

I. Exercising the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

1. Considerations in Exercising the Standard

- a) DCS & contract agencies adhere to the practice of care provided by a foster parent or Caregiver in determining whether to allow a child or youth in his or her care to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities. Examples of such activities include, but are not limited to, extracurricular enrichment, and social activities that may include: dating, outdoor activities, "hanging out" or "sleepovers" with friends, art, poetry, prom, sports, clubs, recreation, vocational & volunteer activities, hobbies, religious/cultural events, field trips, driver's education, birthday parties, etc.
- b) As discussed in more detail below, this may also include activities that support a youth in exploration of their cultural, religious, racial, or ethnic identity as well as their sex or gender orientation.
- c) 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, academic and developmental growth. This will generally be impacted by the child's length of stay in the placement and the foster parent's understanding of the child's strengths and needs. Parents need to talk, read and interact with their children, but what parents really need to know is how they interact makes all the difference in the development of their children's vocabulary, comprehension and critical thinking skills.
- d) Foster parents and caregivers should weigh eight factors when considering the following guidelines:
 - ◆ the overall age, maturity and developmental level of the child,
 - ◆ the potential risk and appropriateness of the activity,
 - ◆ the best interest of the child,
 - ◆ the importance or impact on the child's growth,
 - ◆ the relevance to a family-like experience,
 - ◆ the behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child and any safety plans,
 - ◆ the wishes and interests of the youth, and
 - ◆ how the experience for the youth might impact the foster family as a whole.

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- e) Foster parents and caregivers are 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. These decisions can include opportunities for healthy risk-taking like those typically made by parents of children who are not in foster care. The protocol intends to promote “normalcy” and the ability to engage in healthy developmental appropriate activities that promote well-being for all youth in care. The reasonable and prudent parent standard should take into account that healthy risk taking is part of growing up.
- f) Information regarding a child/youth’s activities are regularly communicated with birth family members (when there is a birth family) within the communication plan established by the team and generally based on decisions of the team.
- g) Foster parents and caregivers provide a nurturing environment that encourages emotional and developmental growth and provides the most family-like setting experience as possible.
- h) Foster parents and caregivers may, at any time, consult with members of the Child and Family Team (CFTM) during the decision making process if they are unsure or confused in regard to the application of applying the guidelines. They also consult with the youth or child’s team if assistance or training is needed in regard to how to support youth with issues related to cultural, ethnic, or religious identify as well as sexual/gender orientation concerns. Foster parents and caregivers provide a nurturing, supportive, and non-discriminatory environment for youth, but are encouraged to seek support when they need assistance in doing so.
- i) Foster parents and caregivers build supports within their families, friends and community networks to support growth opportunities for the children/youth in their care.
- j) Foster parents and caregivers build and promote protective factors in reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect; those protective factors include:
 - ◆ **Youth Resilience-** helping youth manage stress and enhance their ability to function well when faced with stressors, challenges, or adversity; the outcome is personal growth and positive change.
 - ◆ **Social Connections-** helping them have healthy, consistent relationships with people, institutions, the community, and empowered to make sound decisions.
 - ◆ **Knowledge of child & adolescent development-** understanding the unique aspects of adolescent development; implementing developmentally and contextually appropriate best practices and helping the youth understand their current development. Refer to DCS Policy 20.8, Reproductive Health Education and Services for more guidance on health education.
 - ◆ **Child’s Social and Emotional Competence-** helping them develop skills and attitudes that are essential for forming an independent identity and preparing for a productive, responsible, and satisfying adulthood.
 - ◆ **Concrete supports in times of need-** helping the youth understand the importance of asking for help and advocating for oneself, receiving a quality of service designed to preserve youths’ dignity, provide opportunities for skill development, and promote healthy body and mind development.

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2. Encouraging Access to Age-Appropriate Activities and Promoting “Normalcy”

The goal of exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard in the child welfare context is to try to normalize the experience of youth in care so that they have the opportunities and experiences that all youth do that mark a healthy childhood and adolescence. Foster parents and caregivers should keep the following in mind as they exercise the standard:

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) Any out of state, out of country or continuous travel is discussed and documented. Notify court/Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) when appropriate for unruly/delinquent youth, to receive permission for trips out of State/Country. Use form **CS-0679 Authorization DCS Child to Travel out of State/country**, as appropriate.
- d) 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).
- e) Establish reasonable, age appropriate boundaries and curfews and encourage respect for boundaries and curfews. Child/youth understands the parental expectations regarding curfew.
- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) Allow participation in appropriate computer or electronic activities, including cell phones usage and social media with the permission or supervision of foster parents.

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- i) Ensure allocation of age appropriate allowances and encourage appropriate money management.
- j) 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.
- k) 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.
- l) 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.
- m) 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](#).
- n) 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.
- o) 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.
- k) 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.

2. Guide for Normalcy Activities:

See additional attachments for a guide to activities that can promote and encourage normalcy. Engaging in these behaviors is a natural, normal means of healthy development. It is also a way for children and youth to develop skills to mature into high functioning adults:

- a) [Independent Living Youth Handbook](#)
- b) [A Guide for Youth in Foster Care](#)

II. Special Considerations for Exercising The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard

One of the characteristics of adolescence is exploring identity and a sense belonging. Youth do this through participating in activities that enrich their talents and interests, but also through seeking to understand and identify in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion. This exploration may also take the form of exploring or questioning sexual and gender identify. Youth are supported through a safe environment to explore these issues; therefore, it may be necessary for foster parents and caregivers to seek outside training, support, or expertise.

Another special consideration in exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard is identifying and eliminating barriers that particular groups of youth may face to participating in age and developmentally appropriate activities. For example, youth who are pregnant or parenting and youth with disabilities may need additional support to participate in age appropriate activities. Identifying and arranging these supports are part of exercising the standard and are included in the case plan.

1. Cultural Awareness Racial and Ethnic identity:

A young person's identity is directly linked to his or her cultural and ethnic heritage. One of the ways to support a youth in embracing his or her cultural identity is through recognition and acknowledgement of holidays, traditions, rituals, food preferences and customs that may be part of their cultural heritage. Foster families or caregivers could choose to attend community-sponsored cultural events, ethnic fairs, art and music festivals, tribal pow-wows and other celebrations and events that recognize ethnic identities.

Hair & Skin Care Considerations:

Appearance is important to all of us, including foster children. Foster parents caring for children of a different ethnicity, may experience hair and skin care practices quite different from their own. Consulting with a child's immediate and extended family members for advice regarding any body modifications, hair and skin care techniques is the best way to gain specific knowledge about caring for a child's hair, skin and body. When this is not possible, consultation with the child/youths worker or someone that has additional knowledge in the field may be warranted.

2. Religion & Spirituality

Choosing and practicing a religion is generally considered among the rights that parents have with respect to their children that is protected by the US Constitution and remains intact even when a child enters foster care. These rights are not limited by this protocol. Nevertheless, the following principles should be kept in mind when a youth asks to participate in a religious activity and when involving youth in a caregiver's religious practices.

- a) The child's parents have the right to express preferences in regard to religion, spirituality, or related activities for their child.
- b) The age appropriate child can choose the religious or spiritual activities in which he or she wants to participate.
- c) The Family Service Worker (FSW) can help negotiate any challenges related to differing religious and spiritual practice between the foster family, the child and his or her biological family.
- d) The foster family/caregiver's religion or spirituality may be an important part of their family life. It is

3. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth:

Exploring sexual and gender identity is a typical part of growing up. Youth identifying as LGBTQ should be provided the same opportunities as any other child/youth. At the same time, they may need additional or special support to manage exploration of their identity in a safe and nurturing environment. This may include: participating in LGBTQ support groups, or the activities of LGBTQ organizations, or experimentation with different styles of dressing and self-presentation. Flexibility is needed for youth participating in activities that would create safe spaces for LGBTQ in foster care. Caregivers should seek assistance and information on resources and opportunities for these youth if not aware of them and seek consultation with the child/youths worker, when needed. In order for youth to find activities that best suit their specific identity, locations of the activity might be further away and therefore require accommodating transportation and or adjusting a curfew.

Refer to DCS Policy [20.20, Guidelines for Managing Children/Youth in DCS Custody Related to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression](#) for additional information.

Some additional considerations for LGBTQ youth may include:

- Providing and securing clothing that is aligned with the youth's personal gender identity.
- Use of pronouns that the youth has requested ex: he, she and proper name usage.
- Access to health services that specialize in gender identity needs.
- Following the treatment plan set out by the health care provider with special attention to any gender related medical conditions.
- Support and advocacy for LGBT students/ individuals in social and educational setting as requested by youth.
- Checking in with child/youth to ensure they feel supported and accepted in home.

4. Pregnant and Parenting Youth:

- a) Pregnant and parenting youth—mothers and fathers—may face additional barriers to experiencing “normalcy” that should be addressed in the case plan. Mothers and fathers should be supported in their roles as parents as well as in participating in age appropriate activities. Hands on and other parenting instruction should be provided and a youth's right as a parent should be respected and supported in their placement setting. Arrangements for child care must also be made so that parents have the opportunity to pursue their educational and employment goals as well as extra-curricular and enrichment experiences.
- b) Fathers should be supported and included in pre-pregnancy activities and upon birth of their child to support the development of a strong bond with their child and an appropriate co-parenting relationship with the child's mother.
- c) Minor parents retain all rights to their children as a non-minor parent would regardless of whether they are in the child welfare system. However, if a child is removed from a dependent child based on abuse, neglect or a voluntary placement, reasonable efforts must be made to keep parent and child together.
- d) If there is a minor parent in foster care, and if there is no relative/kinship placement available for both the infant child and the minor parent, placement of the infant child with the minor parent will be discussed with the Regional Administrator or Designee prior to a final decision. If there is a need for additional support to the infant, mother and Foster parents, form **CS-0674, Special/Extraordinary Rate Request** is completed and considered to support the child's placement with the minor parent. Refer to DCS Policy **16.36, Title IV-E Foster Care Funds** and **16.29, Foster Home Board Rates**.

5. Youth with Disabilities

- a) Foster parents and caregivers work with the youth's treatment providers and CFTM to identify what services or supports may be needed to overcome barriers to participation. In some cases, overcoming barriers may involve providing advocacy for the youth so that a service provider, school, or organization provides accommodations to a youth. In other cases, the child welfare agency may be making or providing the accommodation. For example, the child welfare agency can provide a sign language interpreter so that a youth who is hearing impaired can participate in an Independent Living Program event or group.
- b) Accommodations and supports that make age-appropriate experiences a reality for youth with disabilities can come in an array of forms. Sign language interpreters, physical modifications, and specialized instruction are among the most familiar types of accommodations. However, the CFTM should be as creative as possible in devising accommodations for youth that can help provide exposure to community and other activities. A youth's behavior related to a trauma history or other diagnoses should not preclude activities and access to the community. Rather, strategies should be devised to enable participation to the greatest extent possible. Accommodations may include increased supervision, de-escalation and safety plans, and coordination with other service providers.
- c) The caregiver and CFTM are encouraged to seek assistance regarding accommodations and opportunities for youth with disabilities from community resources and experts, such as **Disability Rights Tennessee** at **1-800-342-1660** and the **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center** at **615-322-8240**.

Foster Parent Responsibility and Liability

3. Supervision of Children and Youth Doing Age Appropriate Activities

1. These guidelines aid the foster parent and caregiver in making informed decisions regarding a child/youth participating in activities and social events under the supervision of an adult who the foster parent considers safe. Foster parent judgments consistent with these guidelines are considered appropriate.
2. The Foster Parent 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. Factors that should be considered include, but are not limited to: the foster parent's relationship with the individual, length of time the child/youth will be with individuals other than the foster parent, group activities that should be allowed and if the care of the child with this person is routine then a background check is required. If this is an emergency situation and the foster parent would leave their own child with this person, then background checks are not necessary.

4. Liability and Protections for Liability

Generally, a DCS foster parent or caregiver is not liable for harm caused to a child who participates in an activity provided that the foster parent or caregiver has acted in accordance with DCS policy, which includes this protocol. This protocol does not remove, limit, or add any existing liability protection provided by law. These include:

- a) A DCS foster parent is considered a state employee for purposes of the Claims Commission. This means that if a negligent act is committed and the foster parent is operating under DCS policy and guidelines; *ordinarily*, the foster parent will not be personally liable and the claim against the foster parent will be converted to a claim against the State.

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- b) Contract provider agencies are mandated under federal law (HR4980) to provide access to the same activities and experiences as described in this protocol for all children and youth in their care. Refer to the standard *Terms and Conditions* language within the agreed upon contract.

- c) As the law is written, a caregiver or child placing agency, which is acting in good faith and in compliance with the standard, would not ordinarily be civilly liable for an injury that occurred in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard. However, the caregiver or child placing agency would not ordinarily qualify for this civil immunity if the injuries to the child were caused by gross negligence, willful or wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing.

Effective Date: 04/16

Supersedes: 10/15

**Supplemental to: DCS Policy 16.3 & 16.8
RDA SW22**

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Activity #4: Promoting Normalcy

Time: 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Projector
- PowerPoint

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **State** that the goal of exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard in the child welfare context is to try to normalize the experience of youth in care so that they have the opportunities and experiences that all youth do that mark a healthy childhood and adolescence. Foster parents and caregivers should keep the following in mind as they exercise the standard: **(**Or have volunteers read the selections from a card or slide)**
 - a) 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.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Any out of state, out of country or continuous travel is discussed and documented. Notify court /Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) when appropriate for unruly/delinquent youth, to receive permission for trips out of

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State/Country. Use form **CS-0679 Authorization DCS Child to Travel out of State/country**, as appropriate.

- d) 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).
- e) Establish reasonable, age appropriate boundaries and curfews and encourage respect for boundaries and curfews. Child/youth understands the parental expectations regarding curfew.
- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) Allow participation in appropriate computer or electronic activities, including cell phones usage and social media with the permission or supervision of foster parents.
- i) Ensure allocation of age appropriate allowances and encourage appropriate money management.
- j) 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.

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- k) 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.
- l) 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.
- m) Youth 16 and older should have the opportunity to obtain driver's training and a license, when appropriate.

Note: *In 2015, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter 330 to create equity for youth in foster care who seek to obtain a driver license in Tennessee. Previous law allowed only parents, stepparents, or guardians to assume financial responsibility without filing future proof of insurance on behalf of the minor. This new law adds foster parents or authorized representative of the Department of Children's Services to the list of adults who are able to assume financial responsibility without filing future proof of insurance.*

Previously, youth in foster care often had to file an SR-22 form or a modified version of this form in order to obtain a license. The SR-22 is no longer needed for youth in custody who have a foster parent willing to assume financial responsibility. The decision for foster parents to assume financial responsibility for children placed in their home will remain voluntary. See more at: <http://tn.gov/dcs/article/getting-your-drivers-license#sthash.1XoxPwEH.dpuf>

- n) 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

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just school activities. Consider use of TFACA Walk Me Home Funding or Community Advisory Boards (CABS) for assistance.

- o) 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.

13. **Share** that there are additional attachments for a guide to activities that can promote and encourage normalcy. Engaging in these behaviors is a natural, normal means of healthy development. It is also a way for children and youth to develop skills to mature into high functioning adults:

- a) 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>

- c) Driver License Guide for Foster Youth

<http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/getting-your-drivers-license>

14. **State** that next we will look at some special considerations for eliminating barriers and exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard.

Activity #5: Applying the Standard

Time: 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Projector
- PowerPoint
- Flipchart Paper
- Markers

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **Divide** participants into small groups. (up to 5) Distribute a scenario and blank worksheet to each group. Participants should read and discuss their group's scenario, following the instructions on the worksheet. Ask the group to choose a spokesperson by seeing who has the most pets. Allow 15 minutes for completion then have each group read and discuss their scenario by using their completed worksheet page, and discussing briefly how they answered their questions. ****Trainer Note:** *Use the trainer aid with the answers to assist the small groups should they have questions.*
2. **Share** that information regarding a child/youth's activities will be regularly communicated with the birth family members within the communication plan established by the team and generally based on decisions of the team.
3. **State** foster parents will provide a nurturing environment that encourages emotional and developmental growth and provides the most family-like setting as possible. Implementing these standards will provide the children in our care the best opportunity to thrive while living away from their birth family.
4. **Explain** that the purpose of this activity was to show how to begin applying these concepts with your foster children. The goal is to make it easier for foster parents to make decisions that will allow for a more normal life for the children in care. When in doubt, always speak to the child's worker or request a Child and Family Team Meeting to discuss further.

Scenarios:

- 1) **Hunting:** Your family enjoys everything outdoors including camping, fishing, canoeing, and hunting. You have always had your bows and guns responsibly locked away. Your 3 adopted children have all been carefully taught safety around water and weapons, and several of their friends have been allowed on hunting trips with your family because their parents know how safe and responsible you are. Michael, your first foster care placement, is 16 years old and was placed in your home several weeks ago. He would like to take a Hunter Safety Course so he could go hunting with your family when the season starts in one month. You have not had much time to get to know Michael but he seems to be enjoying the lifestyle of your family. He has never participated in any of these activities before and is anxious to try new things. Michael has been diagnosed with ADHD and is on medication. He occasionally has outbursts of anger, but is always remorseful after these episodes. You had one phone call from the school shortly after Michael was placed with you that he had threatened another child. There have been no other school incidences since then. Should you advocate to allow Michael to take the Hunter Safety Course and go hunting with your family?

- 2) **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?

- 3) **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

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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?

- 4) **Cell Phone:** Your 13-year-old foster daughter, Brittany, has been in your home for 7 months. Her 14th birthday is coming up and the only thing that she has asked for (begged for!) is a cell phone. You already have a family cell phone plan that covers phones for the two parents and your teenage biological daughter. Brittany has gotten along well with your daughter and the two often hang out together socially with your daughter's friends. Brittany's grades are average, mostly Cs, but she has had a few minor behavior issues at school that have resulted in several after-school detentions. Brittany's mother has not followed her case plan. She walked out of rehab after only 3 days and has not come to a visit for the last two months. Should you buy Brittany a cell phone for her birthday?
- 5) **Lawn Mowing Job:** Alex is 15-years-old and has been in your home for almost a year. He has recently been placed in permanent custody and the agency is actively pursuing an adoptive placement for him. Your elderly neighbor has approached you about hiring Alex to mow his lawn for the summer. There are several other neighbors who might also be willing to hire Alex. Alex has some developmental delays. He is physically small for his age, and his school IEP allows him accommodations in Reading and Math. He tends to hang out with kids younger than himself. You have been frustrated with Alex's lack of responsibility. He is messy and often has to be reminded to do his chores and pack his backpack for school. Should you encourage Alex to take this job?
- 6) **Riding with Other Teens:** Your 15-year-old foster daughter, Molly, has been in your home for 5 months. Molly had to change schools when she came into care and she had a difficult adjustment to your home as she missed her parents and school friends. For weeks, Molly cried a lot and seemed unhappy both at home and at school. Lately, however, she seems to be doing better and adjusting to life in your home. Today Molly called you from school

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sounding very excited. She has been invited to go to an “away” school basketball game with another girl who is 16-years-old and said she would drive Molly home by 7pm. You have met this girl and know her to be a nice kid with no problems at school. It is clear that Molly desperately wants to go. You have to make this decision immediately. Do you say “yes” or “no”?

- 7) **Driver’s License:** Terrance is 16-years-old and has been in your home for 8 months. He has a serious history of legal issues including shoplifting, truancy, and purchase of marijuana. He is currently on probation with the Juvenile Court. Terrance has settled into your home with no serious issues. Moving to your home included changing schools for Terrance and he seems to be doing much better without the influence of his old “crowd”. His grades are mostly C’s with a few D’s and you are advocating for an IEP for him. Terrance just made the soccer team and is asking if he can get his driver’s license in order to make practices. Will you allow Terrence to get his driver’s license?
- 8) **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?

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Scenarios Worksheet: Read the scenario assigned to you and discuss: 1. What do I know about this child that will help me make a decision? 2. What else do I need to know to make this decision? 3 Under what conditions would I say “yes” to this decision? **SCENARIO ASSIGNED** _____

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?		

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Scenario #1: Hunting

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level	Age 16 Caregivers do not know Michael very well	New placement. Can we find out more information about Michael's maturity and developmental levels?
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	There are inherent safety risks in this activity. Caregivers are responsible and safe Caregivers have taught safety issues to other children Michael will have taken Hunter Safety Course Has ADHD and is on medication Has outbursts of anger	What are the safety issues regarding Michael and these weapons? Can Michael follow strict instructions? How did Michael do in the Hunter Safety Course? Is Michael responsible in other areas?
Best interest of the child	Michael wants to go and is interested in the Hunter Safety Course	Does Michael thoroughly understand what all is involved with a hunting trip (a lot of walking, being cold and tired, possible boredom and disappointment)? What kind of trauma has Michael experienced? Is there a possibility of trauma triggers during this trip?
Importance or impact on the child's growth	Michael is anxious to try new things. There is potential for him to learn new skills and responsibility as well as learning to accept instruction and guidance.	Will the caregivers be able to closely supervise Michael to the extent of teaching him these new skills in a safe manner? Does Michael seem to be able to handle disappointment or lack of success in a healthy manner?
Relevance to a family-like experience	Family does outdoor activities on a regular basis. It is an important part of their family life. All of the other children in the family participate.	Is there a back-up plan in case Michael does not do well during a hunting trip? Could an adult either engage in another activity with him or leave and go home?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	Michael has outbursts of anger and has had at least one bullying incident. He has only been in the home a few weeks.	What are the conditions under which Michael has anger outbursts? What happened in the school incident? Does Michael follow directions well? How does Michael handle criticism and correction?

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Wishes and interests of the youth	Michael wants to go hunting.	
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	This is the family's first foster placement.	Does the family understand that teaching a child who has experienced trauma is different than teaching other children about safety issues? How does Michael's birth parent feel about this trip? Are the caregivers willing to cover the costs? Will DCS allow this trip?
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

Scenario #2: Spending the Night

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level	Age 10 Does well in school	Are there any development delays not listed in the scenario?
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	Tessa could get hurt in friend's home. Tessa could be embarrassed if she wets the bed or has a night terror. Caregivers know the friend's family fairly well but parents have never been to friend's home.	Is this house safe? Is it comfortable for the caregivers to visit the friend's house and see where Tessa will be staying? Can the caregivers honor confidentiality issues for Tessa but also talk to the friend's parents about specific issues of Tessa's care? Can the caregivers trust the friend's parents to contact them immediately if there seems to be a problem?
Best interest of the child	Tessa could have a great time and enjoy this activity.	Is this what she wants to do? What kind of trauma has Tessa experienced? Are there potential trauma triggers that should be addressed prior to this activity?

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Importance or impact on the child's growth	Tessa could learn some independence skills while staying with her friend. There is great potential for appropriate social interaction and building of social skills. Exposure to diversity in family settings. If an accident does happen, she can learn how to handle it.	Have these caregivers talked to Tessa about how she might feel being away from home all night long? Is Tessa emotionally ready for this activity? Is there anything else we need to do to set Tessa up for success? Does this other family have any significant cultural differences between themselves and the foster family and/or Tessa's birth family for which Tessa should be prepared?
Relevance to a family-like experience	This seems to be a very "normal" activity for children of this age and developmental stage.	Is there a back-up plan to pick Tessa up in the middle of the night if she decides she wants to come home?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	History of Bedwetting, but not in last 3 months History of Night terrors, but has not occurred in current foster home No behavior problems in current foster home	How does Tessa feel about these past nighttime problems? Is she afraid that they might happen during this activity? How will she handle it if she finds that she wets the bed or wakes up in terror?
Wishes and interests of the youth	Tessa has been invited, but has not stated if she wants to go or not.	Does she want to attend? Is she concerned about saying yes?
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	Tessa has been in the home for 6 months. These caregivers have probably gotten to know her well.	What does DCS policy say?
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

Scenario #3: Dating

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level	Almost 17 years old Is a junior in high school and makes good grades	Are there any developmental delays not listed in the scenario?

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<p>Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity</p>	<p>Riding with a teen driver has inherent risks. This boy has had his license for over a year. The caregivers do not know this boy or his family.</p>	<p>Can the caregiver get any information on the driving record of this boy? How can they determine whether he is a safe driver? What, where and what time is the movie? What exactly is meant by the two kids "hanging out"?</p>
<p>Best interest of the child</p>	<p>Brooke seems to want to go.</p>	<p>What kind of trauma has Brooke experienced? Are there potential trauma triggers that should be addressed prior to this activity? If permission is denied, is Brooke likely to try to sneak out or otherwise defy these parent's wishes?</p>
<p>Importance or impact on the child's growth</p>	<p>Potential for positive social and emotional development within the realm of dating. Potential for practice of good decision-making skills. Potential for practice of responsibility for adherence to curfew and other rules. Opportunity for the family to do some sexual education.</p>	<p>Have these caregivers talked to Brooke about possible negative situations in which she could be put, and how she will handle them? Does Brooke seem to have the self-assurance and confidence to advocate for herself if she is in a situation that she does not like?</p>
<p>Relevance to a family-like experience</p>	<p>Most young people ages 16 and older are dating unsupervised.</p>	<p>Would these caregivers allow their permanent child to go on this date? Can these caregivers help Brooke come up with an alternative for spending time with this boy if permission is denied? If permission is granted, can these caregivers have a back-up plan in case Brooke wants to cut this date short?</p>
<p>Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child</p>	<p>Brooke is quiet and easy-going. No problems in school or in home.</p>	<p>Are there any other behavior issues not listed in the scenario?</p>
<p>Wishes and interests of the youth</p>	<p>Brooke would like to go out with this boy. They want to go to a movie.</p>	<p>Has she been on a date before? Have there been any previous issues related to dating?</p>

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How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	Brooke has been in the home for 4-months and has adjusted well.	What is DCS policy on riding in cars with teen drivers unsupervised? What does the birth parent think?
Under what conditions would I say “yes” to this decision?		

Scenario #4: Cell Phone

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child’s overall age, maturity and development level	Almost 14 years old Gets along well socially with friends of foster sister Average grades in school	Are there developmental delays not listed in this scenario?
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	Contact with people that are not allowed Brittany’s birth mother is not in touch with Brittany and left rehab Using the cell phone inappropriately (ex. sexting) Loss or damage of cell phone	Are there conditions of the case plan that forbid contact with family members? Has Brittany shown responsibility in other areas? Does Brittany understand the responsibilities of owning a cell phone?
Best interest of the child	If used appropriately, it could help her feel more like her peers. Granting this request could help with this family bonding with Brittany and her ability to trust and attach.	What kind of trauma has Brittany experienced? Are there any aspects of use of this cell phone that could create trauma triggers? Is Brittany ready for this responsibility? Would a cell phone be setting her up for success or failure?
Importance or impact on the child’s growth	Potential for learning about good choices and consequences. Potential for practice of responsibility and accountability. Enhancement of social development if used appropriately.	Has Brittany done a good job of accepting consequences when she has made poor choices? Could these caregivers use the cell phone for imposing consequences? What do these caregivers know about Brittany’s friends? Do they trust them to encourage proper use of the cell phone?
Relevance to a family-like experience	A cell phone seems to be the norm for most children of Brittany’s age. This family already has a cell phone plan that covers	Is Brittany willing to agree to specific conditions regarding use of the cell phone (limits on data usage, limits on internet availability, putting it away at

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	everyone else.	night)? Can these caregivers set up parental controls to ensure compliance?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	Minor behavior issues at school resulting in after school detentions	What were these behavior issues? Would a cell phone be too much temptation for Brittany to engage in inappropriate behaviors?
Wishes and interests of the youth	She is begging for a cell phone. Brittany is 14-years-old.	What age did caregivers purchase a phone for their biological daughter?
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	There will be a financial cost to purchase the phone and service. Brittany has been in this home for 7-months so these caregivers know her fairly well.	What is the DCS Policy regarding cell phones for foster children? How much will the additional phone cost? Is the family willing to pay?
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

Scenario #5: Lawn Mowing Job

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level	Age 15 with developmental delays Physically small for his age Some cognitive and social delays	How significant are these delays? Is Alex capable of mowing lawns and managing the "business" aspects of this job?
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	Alex could get hurt while mowing lawns. Alex could be unsuccessful in keeping this job.	How experienced is he in using the mower? Does Alex understand the physical risks of this job? Is he willing to comply with the needed precautions for his safety?
Best interest of the child	This job could help Alex to bridge some of the gaps in his developmental delays. It could give him some confidence and provide some skills to help him achieve success in other areas.	Does Alex want this job? Is he motivated to do the work and develop a schedule for mowing and collection of payment for his work? What kind of trauma has Alex experienced? Are there any trauma triggers that need to

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		be considered before Alex takes this job?
Importance or impact on the child's growth	Alex has displayed lack of responsibility. This job could be a good opportunity to learn some responsibility and accountability while still in the safety net of his foster family. The money that Alex earns will provide an opportunity for learning about budgeting and money management.	Is Alex compliant with learning these new skills? Are the foster caregivers willing to provide supervision and help for Alex as he is learning these new skills? Will these foster caregivers provide guidance and correction if Alex makes mistakes with this new responsibility?
Relevance to a family-like experience	A lawn mowing job is typical for a boy Alex's age.	Would this foster family allow their permanent child to take this job under the same conditions?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	Alex is messy and needs to be reminded about his chores and responsibilities.	Are there other behavior issues that are not listed in this scenario? Do any of these behaviors impact the decision to allow Alex to take this job?
Wishes and interests of the youth	Alex has been asked to mow a neighbor's yard, but has not mentioned how he feels about it.	Is this something that Alex wants to do? Is it the caregiver that wants this or would Alex enjoy mowing yards in the neighborhood?
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	Birth parents rights have been terminated. Alex has been in the home for almost a year so the foster family likely knows him well.	What does DCS Policy say about foster children working and operating machinery?
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

Scenario #6: Riding in the Car with Another Teen

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level	Age 12	Are there any developmental delays not listed in the scenario?

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Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	Molly could get hurt while out of the foster caregiver's care. Molly could become anxious and afraid and regret the decision to go to the game. The foster caregiver knows this friend to be a nice kid with no behavior issues.	Is this friend a safe driver and responsible? Is the foster caregiver able to ask the other mother questions about this activity? What questions should the foster caregiver ask the other mother to mitigate the potential risk factors?
Best interest of the child	Molly has recently begun to adjust to her foster care placement. This activity has the potential to provide a fun time for Molly and make her happier in placement. Molly wants to go to this game.	What kind of trauma has Molly experienced? Are there any trauma triggers that should be considered when making this decision?
Importance or impact on the child's growth	This activity has potential to provide social enhancement for Molly.	Does Molly know what to do if she doesn't feel safe?
Relevance to a family-like experience	Most children this age are allowed to attend activities with friend's parents.	Would the foster caregivers allow their permanent child to go to the game with this teen? Is your answer based on the pressure you feel to answer quickly?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	Difficulty in foster care placement adjustment that has improved recently.	Are there any other behavior issues not listed in the scenario? Can Molly be trusted to behave well at the game?
Wishes and interests of the youth	Molly is excited about being invited to an away game and would like to go.	Is this activity ok with the caregivers? Have there been any issues on outings in the past?
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	Molly has been in this home for 5-months	What does DCS policy say about foster children riding in cars with other teens?
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

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Scenario #7: Driver's License

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child's overall age, maturity and development level	Age 16; Cs and Ds in school. May need an IEP; Appears to be athletically talented.	Are there any developmental delays not listed in this scenario?
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	Terrance has been involved in illegal activity in the past in part to the crowd he was involved with. He is doing well in the caregiver's home. His grades are improving.	Would Terrance be able to make appropriate choices about driving a car? What is his maturity level? Should there be a limited area that he should be allowed to drive to and from?
Best interest of the child	He has been doing well in the caregiver's home. The added extra responsibility could have a positive effect on Terrance.	Will driving be too much of a responsibility for Terrance? Are the caregiver's setting him up for failure? What does the birth parent say?
Importance or impact on the child's growth	Driving a car and following rules around driving, would be a normal growth experience for a child his age. Playing soccer will give Terrance a great source for growth.	What happens if he does not get his driver's license? Who will take him to practice? If nobody can take him to practice, would it be more detrimental to keep him from playing soccer?
Relevance to a family-like experience	All family members, including older children, drive and have played sports in the past.	Will the family be able to provide a car for Terrance to drive? Will there be added pressure on the family should he begin driving?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	Terrance has had a serious history of illegal activity. He is currently on probation with juvenile court. His behavior has improved since being away from his old crowd.	Will driving put Terrance at risk for making poor choices while away from home? Who will be allowed to ride in the car with him? What rules will need to be put in place? Is he emotionally mature enough to drive?
Wishes and interests of the youth	Terrance wants to get his driver's license so that he can get to soccer practice.	Is allowing Terrance to get his driver's license what he wants to do or are the caregiver's pushing him to do so? What do the birth parents say?
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	Terrance is on probation with Juvenile Court. There is cost involved in getting a driver's license and driving a car, including car insurance.	Will the conditions of Terrance's probation allow him to play soccer? Will the probation officer support this decision? What does DCS Policy state about driver's license?

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Under what conditions would I say “yes” to this decision?

Scenario #8: Party with ATV/Trampoline/Pond

Considerations	What do we know?	What else do we need to know?
Child’s overall age, maturity and development level	Age 12 Happy and well-adjusted Has a lot of friends at school	Are there any developmental delays not listed in this scenario?
Potential risk and appropriateness of the activity	TJ could get hurt while participating in any of the listed activities if he is allowed to go. If permission is denied, TJ could be further harmed by his stigma as a foster child and lack of opportunity.	How well does the foster family know the family that is hosting the party? Is TJ correct that the party will be well supervised? Has the host family had parties like this in the past? Can the foster family talk to the host family and assess risk factors? Is it possible for a foster caregiver to attend at least part of the party with TJ?
Best interest of the child	TJ clearly wants to go to this party.	What will be the negative impact if TJ is not allowed to go? What kind of trauma has TJ experienced? Are there any trauma triggers that need to be considered before making this decision?
Importance or impact on the child’s growth	There is potential for social and emotional growth and even further opportunity for TJ to be happy and well-adjusted in this home.	Has TJ ever participated in the listed activities? Will there be an opportunity for instruction before he rides an ATV or uses fishing equipment? How well does TJ accept instruction? Will he be willing to ask for help even in front of his friends?
Relevance to a family-like experience	TJ’s friends seem to all be going to this party. It seems to be an activity that is “normal” for the kids he knows.	Would the foster family allow one of their permanent children to attend a similar activity?
Behavioral, emotional and risk-taking history of the child	Been in the home for one year with no issues.	What is TJ’s history of cooperation and responsibility? Is he able to handle this new experience?

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Wishes and interests of the youth	TJ wants to attend the party. He is 12-years-old.	How will he feel if he is unable to go to the party? Are there any behaviors that would prohibit him from attending or using the ATV, Trampoline and pond? What happens if he gets hurt?
How the experience might impact the foster family as a whole	The foster family is hoping to adopt TJ.	What is the policy regarding participation in these activities?
Under what conditions would I say "yes" to this decision?		

Activity #6: Eliminating Barriers

Time: 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Projector
- PowerPoint
- Flipchart Paper
- Markers

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **Show** video clip of Kid President and discuss how his story is one of eliminating barriers in order to promote a normal childhood. Robby was adopted out of foster care along with his sister. Both of them have Osteogenesis Imperfecta or “brittle bone disease” which causes the bones to break very easily. It would have been easy for Robby’s foster parents to have put him in a protective “bubble” to keep him from breaking bones, but as you can see in the video he is like other boys his age, running, playing and dancing. Foster children come into care with trauma that sometimes makes us want to protect them to a point that we keep them from normal childhood activities. In doing so, we keep them from experiencing the healing that comes with just being a normal kid.
2. **Share** One of the characteristics of adolescence is exploring identity and a sense belonging. Youth do this through participating in activities that enrich their talents and interests, but also through seeking to understand and identify in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion. This exploration may also take the form of exploring or questioning sexual and gender identify. Youth are supported through a safe environment to explore these issues; therefore, it may be necessary for foster parents and caregivers to seek outside training, support, or expertise. Avoiding these situations can create more trauma for a child.
3. **State** that another special consideration in exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard is identifying and eliminating barriers that particular groups of youth may face to participating in age and developmentally

appropriate activities. For example, youth who are pregnant or parenting and youth with disabilities may need additional support to participate in age appropriate activities. Identifying and arranging these supports are part of exercising the standard and are included in the case plan.

4. **Divide** participants into 5 small groups. Provide each group with a flipchart with the following headings listed. **Cultural Awareness, Religion and Spirituality, LGBTQ Youth, Pregnant and Parenting Youth, and Disabled Youth.** Have the group discuss their topic and brainstorm some of the possible barriers involved in parenting youth from these categories, allowing them to use their participant guides as a reference. Then below those responses, have the group come up with ideas for overcoming those barriers. Have each group choose a spokesperson to summarize their responses. Allow for 15 minutes for this activity.

a) Cultural Awareness

1. Racial and Ethnic identity:

A young person's identity is directly linked to his or her cultural and ethnic heritage. One of the ways to support a youth in embracing his or her cultural identity is through recognition and acknowledgement of holidays, traditions, rituals, food preferences and customs that may be part of their cultural heritage. Foster families or caregivers could choose to attend community-sponsored cultural events, ethnic fairs, art and music festivals, tribal pow-wows and other celebrations and events that recognize ethnic identities.

2. Hair & Skin Care Considerations:

Appearance is important to all of us, including foster children. Foster parents caring for children of a different ethnicity, may experience hair and skin care practices quite different from their own. Consulting with a child's immediate and extended family members for advice regarding any body modifications, hair and skin care techniques is the best way to gain specific knowledge about caring for a child's hair, skin and body. When this is not possible, consultation with the child/youths worker or someone that has additional knowledge in the field may be warranted.

b) Religion & Spirituality

Choosing and practicing a religion is generally considered among the rights that parents have with respect to their children that is protected by the US Constitution and remains intact even when a child enters foster care. These rights are not limited by this protocol. Nevertheless, the following principles should be kept in mind when a youth asks to participate in a religious activity and when involving youth in a caregiver's religious practices.

- (1) The child's parents have the right to express preferences in regard to religion, spirituality, or related activities for their child.
- (2) The age appropriate child can choose the religious or spiritual activities in which he or she wants to participate.
- (3) The Family Service Worker (FSW) can help negotiate any challenges related to differing religious and spiritual practice between the foster family, the child and his or her biological family.
- (4) The foster family/caregiver's religion or spirituality may be an important part of their family life. It is acceptable to invite a child to participate, but never to impose a religious practice on the child/youth.

c) LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth

Exploring sexual and gender identity is a typical part of growing up. Youth identifying as LGBTQ should be provided the same opportunities as any other child/youth. At the same time, they may need additional or special support to manage exploration of their identity in a safe and nurturing environment. This may include: participating in LGBTQ support groups, or the activities of LGBTQ organizations, or experimentation with different styles of dressing and self-presentation. Flexibility is needed for youth participating in activities that would create safe spaces for LGBTQ in foster care. Caregivers should seek assistance and information on resources and opportunities for these youth if not aware of them and seek consultation with the child/youths worker, when needed. In order for youth to find activities that best suit their specific identity, locations of the activity might be further away and therefore require accommodating transportation and or adjusting a curfew.

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Refer to DCS Policy 20.20, Guidelines for Managing Children/Youth in DCS Custody Related to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression for additional information.

Some additional considerations for LGBTQ youth may include:

- 1) Providing and securing clothing that is aligned with the youth's personal gender identity.
- 2) Use of pronouns that the youth has requested ex: he, she and proper name usage.
- 3) Access to health services that specialize in gender identity needs.
- 4) Following the treatment plan set out by the health care provider with special attention to any gender related medical conditions.
- 5) Support and advocacy for LGBT students/ individuals in social and educational setting as requested by youth.
- 6) Checking in with child/youth to ensure they feel supported and accepted in home.

d) Pregnant and Parenting Youth

- 1) Pregnant and parenting youth—mothers and fathers—may face additional barriers to experiencing “normalcy” that should be addressed in the case plan. Mothers and fathers should be supported in their roles as parents as well as in participating in age appropriate activities. Hands on and other parenting instruction should be provided and a youth's right as a parent should be respected and supported in their placement setting. Arrangements for child care must also be made so that parents have the opportunity to pursue their educational and employment goals as well as extra-curricular and enrichment experiences.
- 2) Fathers should be supported and included in pre-pregnancy activities and upon birth of their child to support the development of a strong bond with their child and an appropriate co-parenting relationship with the child's mother.
- 3) Minor parents retain all rights to their children as a non-minor parent would regardless of whether they are in the child welfare system. However, if a child is removed from a dependent child

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based on abuse, neglect or a voluntary placement, reasonable efforts must be made to keep parent and child together.

- 4) If there is a minor parent in foster care, and if there is no relative/kinship placement available for both the infant child and the minor parent, placement of the infant child with the minor parent will be discussed with the Regional Administrator or Designee prior to a final decision. If there is a need for additional support to the infant, mother and Foster parents, form CS-0674, Special/Extraordinary Rate Request is completed and considered to support the child's placement with the minor parent. Refer to DCS Policy 16.36, Title IV-E Foster Care Funds and 16.29, Foster Home Board Rates

e) Youth with Disabilities

- 1) Youth with disabilities and special needs should have access to the same opportunities for participation in age and developmentally appropriate activities as their peers without special needs. Under federal and state law, individuals with disabilities cannot be excluded from services and benefits provided by the child welfare agency based on their disability. The obligation to provide normalcy and access to age and developmentally appropriate experiences applies to all youth in the care of the child welfare agency. The child welfare agency and its representatives must make reasonable accommodations for the youth if there are barriers to participation based on the youth's disability. Schools and the majority of providers of organized activities and public accommodations are obligated to refrain from discrimination based on disability and provide reasonable accommodations.
- 2) Foster parents and caregivers work with the youth's treatment providers and CFTM to identify what services or supports may be needed to overcome barriers to participation. In some cases, overcoming barriers may involve providing advocacy for the youth so that a service provider, school, or organization provides accommodations to a youth. In other cases, the child welfare agency may be making or providing the accommodation. For example, the

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child welfare agency can provide a sign language interpreter so that a youth who is hearing impaired can participate in an Independent Living Program event or group.

- 3) Accommodations and supports that make age-appropriate experiences a reality for youth with disabilities can come in an array of forms. Sign language interpreters, physical modifications, and specialized instruction are among the most familiar types of accommodations. However, the CFTM should be as creative as possible in devising accommodations for youth that can help provide exposure to community and other activities. A youth's behavior related to a trauma history or other diagnoses should not preclude activities and access to the community. Rather, strategies should be devised to enable participation to the greatest extent possible. Accommodations may include increased supervision, de-escalation and safety plans, and coordination with other service providers.
- 4) The caregiver and CFTM are encouraged to seek assistance regarding accommodations and opportunities for youth with disabilities from community resources and experts, such as Disability Rights Tennessee at 1-800-342-1660 and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center at 615-322-8240.

5. **State** that there are two main points to consider for foster parent responsibility and liability when applying prudent parenting protocol.

- **Supervision of Children and Youth Doing Age Appropriate Activities**

- a) These guidelines aid the foster parent and caregiver in making informed decisions regarding a child/youth participating in activities and social events under the supervision of an adult who the foster parents considers safe. Foster parent judgments consistent with these guidelines are considered appropriate.
- b) The Foster Parent 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. Factors that should be considered include, but are not limited to: the foster parent's relationship with the individual, length of time the child/youth

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will be with individuals other than the foster parent, group activities that should be allowed and if the care of the child with this person is routine then a background check is required. If this is an emergency situation and the foster parent would leave their own child with this person, then background checks are not necessary.

- **Liability and Protections for Liability**

Generally, a DCS foster parent or caregiver is not liable for harm caused to a child who participates in an activity provided that the foster parent or caregiver has acted in accordance with DCS policy, which includes this protocol. This protocol does not remove, limit, or add any existing liability protection provided by law. These include:

- a) A DCS foster parent is considered a state employee for purposes of the Claims Commission. This means that if a negligent act is committed and the foster parent is operating under DCS policy and guidelines; *ordinarily*, the foster parent will not be personally liable and the claim against the foster parent will be converted to a claim against the State.
- b) Contract provider agencies are mandated under federal law (HR4980) to provide access to the same activities and experiences as described in this protocol for all children and youth in their care. Refer to the standard *Terms and Conditions* language within the agreed upon contract.
- c) As the law is written, a caregiver or child placing agency, which is acting in good faith and in compliance with the standard, would not ordinarily be civilly liable for an injury that occurred in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard. However, the caregiver or child placing agency would not ordinarily qualify for this civil immunity if the injuries to the child were caused by gross negligence, willful or wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing.

Activity #7: Review and Closing

Time: 10 Minutes

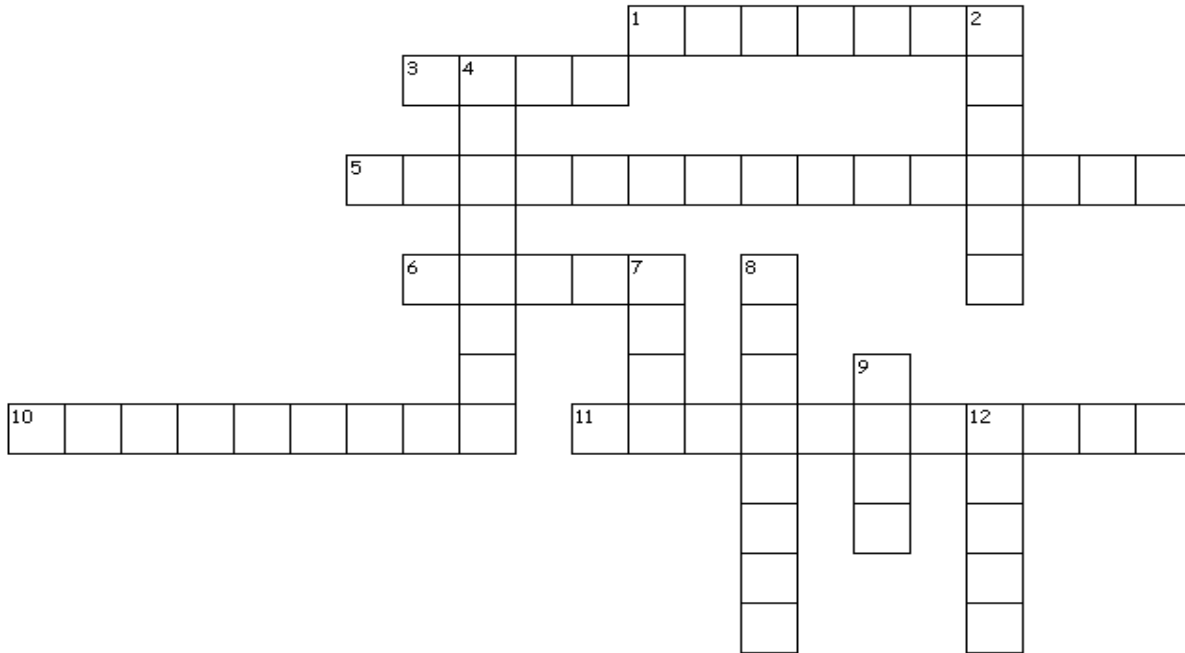
Materials Needed:

- Projector
- PowerPoint

Key Points/Instructions:

1. **Refer** participants to the Crossword Puzzle worksheet located in their participant guides. As a review of the material (transference of learning) have them take 10 minutes to complete.
2. **Discuss** the answers to the Crossword Puzzle.
****Trainer Note: The answers to the crossword puzzle can be found in the back of their participant guides.**
3. **Ask** participants if there are any questions. Thank the audience for attending, and let them know that if there are questions to please contact you. Show them the slide with contact information listed.
4. **Distribute** evaluations for each participant and ask them to leave completed forms face down at the front of the room as they leave.
5. **Distribute** certificates.

Prudent Parenting Review



Across

1. Parenting style that attempts to create normalcy for foster children.
3. Foster youth should be allowed to participate in activities with some ____ involved because it helps them to grow.
5. Foster youth should be allowed to participate in ____ activities.
6. What we focus on ____.
10. Foster parents should use their best ____ when determining if an individual is an appropriate supervisor for the child.
11. Refrain from use of ____ such as "foster child" or "level 3 child" outside the team setting.

Down

2. Exposing youth to typical youth activities helps kids overcome ____.
4. Activities should be selected that are in the best ____ of the child.
7. School is identified as a ____ place, so limit professional visits to school.
8. Described as the ability to easily participate in age-appropriate social, educational, and enrichment activities.
9. Foster parents should not say "No" before they ____.
12. Youth who identify as ____ should be provided the same opportunities as any other youth.

**TRAUMA | RISK | EXTRACURRICULAR | KNOW | INTEREST | LGBTQ | NORMALCY
PRUDENT | TERMINOLOGY | GROWS | SAFE | JUDGEMENT**

Crossword Answer Sheet

ACROSS	DOWN
1. Prudent	2. Trauma
3. Risk	4. Interest
5. Extracurricular	7. Safe
6. Grows	8. Normalcy
10. Judgement	9. Know
11. Terminology	12. LGBTQ

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