



# CREATING NORMALCY THROUGH PRUDENT PARENTING

Participant Guide | 2016



**Creating Normalcy  
through Prudent Parenting  
For Staff**

**Welcome to...**



### Ground Rules

- Be on time
- Please turn off cell phones
- Please hold calls until break
- Actively participate
- Return from breaks on time
- Avoid disturbing others
- Avoid performing activities other than training
- Have fun! 😊

### Expectations

- Be **R**esponsible for your own learning
- Have **E**njoyment of opportunity
- Be **S**ensitive to each other's needs and diversity
- Know **P**rofessionals are professional in their conduct
- Embrace **E**ducation as a continuous process that requires effort
- Cherish **C**ommitment to personal growth and development
- Acknowledge **T**ime management is personal management

## Introductions



## Objectives: You will be able to...

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

**From the Youth (Read a Card)**



**TN** Department of  
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**Notes:**

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### Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard

- Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act 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.”**



### Protocol for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard (RPPS)

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).



## Define "Normalcy"



### Notes:

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### Define “Normalcy”

Normalcy can be described as:

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



### Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

***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.***





## Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

### ***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,



## Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

### ***And young people know that it is not normal:***

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



## Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

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.



## From the Youth (Read a Card)



## Activity: How Many Bottles?



## What We Focus On Grows!

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

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.”***

### Excerpt: Marchelle Roberts

- What are your thoughts about this excerpt?
- What are our foster children missing out on based on this statement?
- Why does normalcy matter to foster youth?



### Normalcy

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



#### **Normalcy helps build life skills.**

- Life skills are learned through real life experiences, in the context of relationships (Strotzman, 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).
- 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.

## Create Normalcy by...

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



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## From the Youth (Read a Card)



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## Protocol for Reasonable & Prudent Parenting

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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(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**

## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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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.

## Other Factors to Consider

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Foster Parents Will:

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

## Other Factors to Consider

### Foster Parents Will:

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



## Other Factors to Consider

### Foster Parents Will:

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



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## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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- 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.
  - ✓ **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.

**From the Youth (Read a Card)**



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### Promoting Normalcy...

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



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### Promoting Normalcy...

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

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

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## Promoting Normalcy...

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.



## Promoting Normalcy...

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





## Promoting Normalcy...

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



## Promoting Normalcy...

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



### Promoting Normalcy...

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



### Promoting Normalcy...

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



## Promoting Normalcy...

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



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### Notes:

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### Promoting Normalcy...

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



### Promoting Normalcy...

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



## Promoting Normalcy...

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



## Promoting Normalcy...

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

- In 2015, laws passed adding foster parents as responsible parties when considering a foster youth who wants to obtain a driver license in Tennessee. The expectation is that foster youth can seek this privilege like any other teenage driver without additional paperwork, if the foster parent is willing to assume financial responsibility. The decision is voluntary.



### Promoting Normalcy...

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



### Promoting Normalcy...

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



### Additional Tools

#### Independent Living Youth Handbook

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

#### A Guide for Youth in Foster Care

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

#### Driver's License Guide for Foster Youth

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



## Promoting Normalcy

- 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.

## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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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.
- 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



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## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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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>  
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.

**From the Youth (Read a Card)**



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### Activity: Scenarios!



- Break into groups
- Read assigned scenario
- Answer questions on the worksheet
- Select a spokesperson
- Read scenario to the large group
- Discuss your responses

### Activity Review

- Information regarding a child's activities will be regularly communicated with the birth family members based on decisions made by the team as a whole. When in doubt, ask the team.
- Implementing these standards will provide the children in our care the best opportunity to thrive while living away from their birth family.
- This activity gives guidance on how to apply these concepts in the foster home, that will allow for a more normal life for children in care.

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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?		

### 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

## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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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 sounding very excited. She has been invited to go to an "away" school

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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?

## Kid President



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## Kid President

- Was adopted out of Tennessee foster care (Robby)
- Suffers from Osteogenesis Imperfecta "brittle bone disease"
- Is allowed to be a "normal" kid



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### Small Group Activity



- Cultural Awareness
- Religion & Spirituality
- LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth
- Pregnant & Parenting Youth
- Youth with Disabilities

## Special Considerations

### 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.

### **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.

### **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

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## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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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:

- 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.

### **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.

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- 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 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

### **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.

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- 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 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.

### Responsibility and Liability

- **Supervision of Children and Youth Doing Age Appropriate Activities**
- **Liability and Protections for Liability**



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- **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 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

## Creating Normalcy through Prudent Parenting

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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.

### Please Note:

- 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.

## From the Youth (Read a Card)



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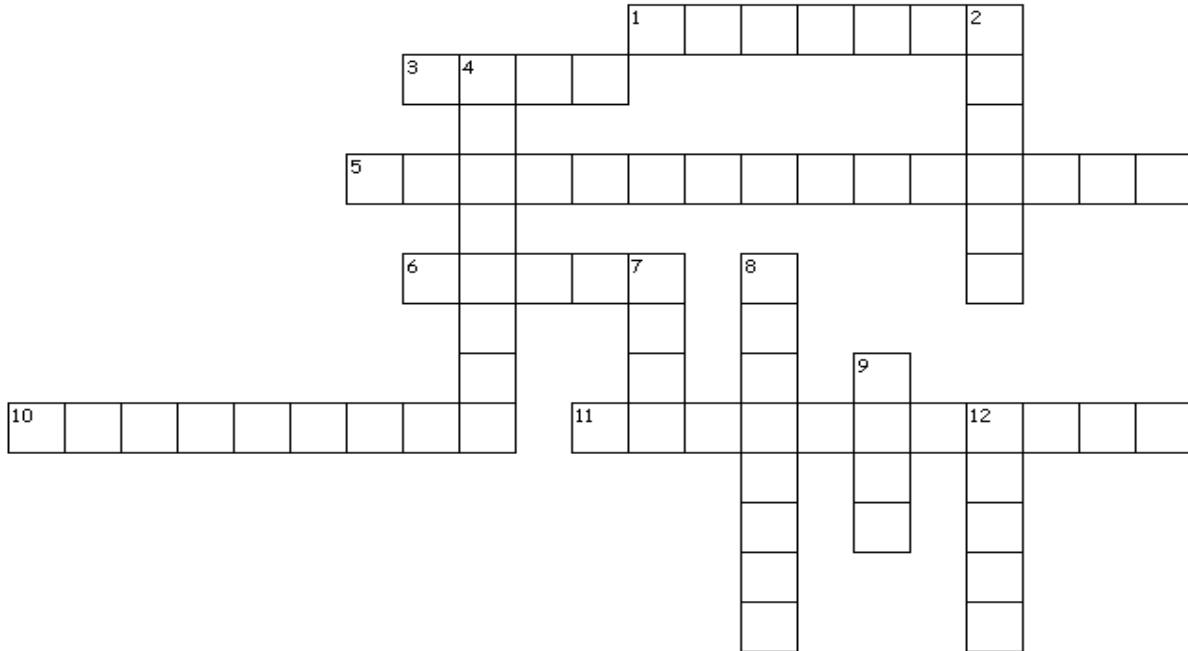
## Crossword Puzzle Review



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**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**

**Contact**

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**Notes:**

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## Crossword Answer Sheet

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

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