

Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care

Implementing the Reasonable and Prudent
Parent Standard in Missouri

AGENDA

- Federal & State Laws
- Reasonable & Prudent Parenting Standards
 - What It Covers
 - Definitions
 - Brain Development
 - Non-Negotiables
 - RPPS and Residential
 - Youth Grievance Process
 - References

Learning Objectives

Identify the federal and state laws and Child Welfare policy reference supporting implementation of the RPPS

Understand the goals of RPPS

Learn the basics of how the adolescent brain develops

Learn the grievance process for youth in foster care

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard

Federal Law requires the designated state authority or authorities to:

1. develop a reasonable and prudent parent standard for the child's participation in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities; and
2. apply this standard to any foster family home or child care institution receiving funds under title IV part E.

Reasonable and Prudent

“Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard”

the standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

Federal and State Laws

Preventing Sex Trafficking and
Strengthening Families Act (HB 4980 –
2014)

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4980>

Missouri House Bill 1877 (2016)

<http://house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills161/billpdf/truly/HB1877T.PDF>

State Statute 210.660

<http://www.moga.mo.gov/LawsEnacted/2016/2100000660NH18771T.HTML>

But Why? – Federal law was created to ensure children in foster care receive as close to a normal experience in their lives as possible. Engaging in normal activities without interference from agencies promotes this ideal.

Voices of Youth: Normalcy Matters

- ▶ “Foster parents should have the dominant say in our social lives instead of our team that doesn’t know us on a personal level. In my foster home they allowed me to keep in contact with my grandmother and friends. They also let me stay in the sports I was playing. I don’t want to always get everything approved by a judge, such as vacations and hair dye.”
- ▶ “They (foster parents) let my friends come over and they let me go with my friends. And they let me dress how I want and express myself.”
- ▶ “My mother did not show a lot of interest in attending my school events so it meant a lot to me when my foster parents showed up to my open house and debate banquet. Even though these are small things, it shows that you care. Also, it adds a sense of normalcy because a “normal” child would have parents attend these school functions. “

Why normalcy?

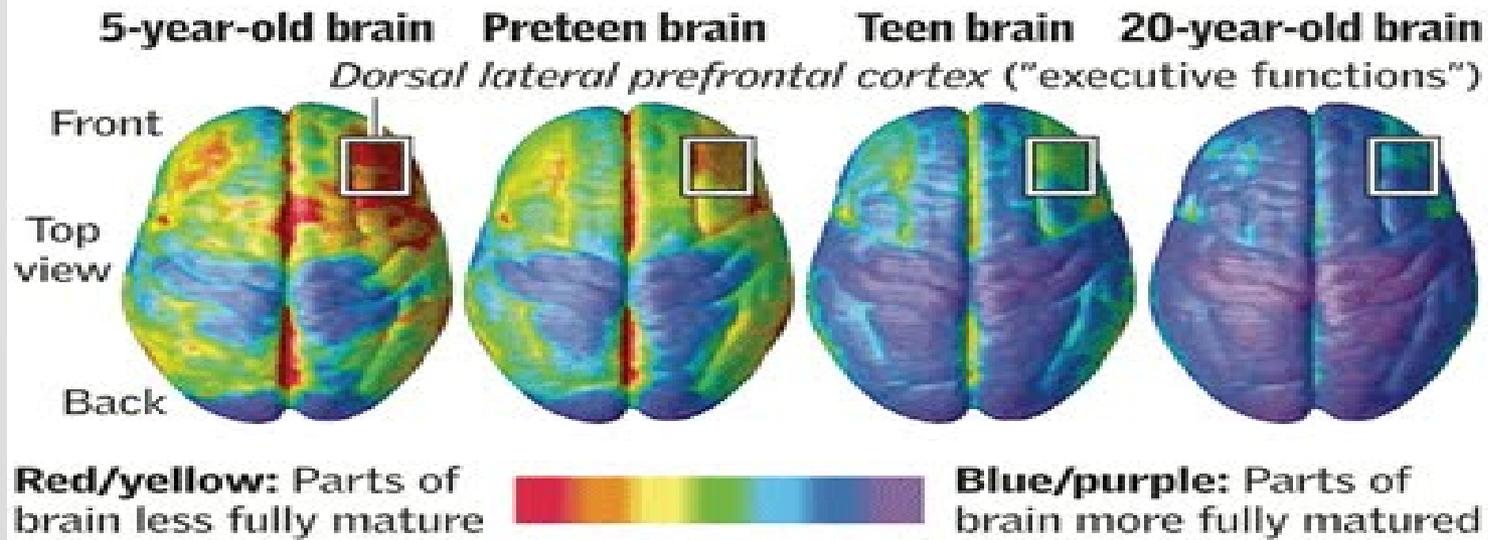
Transitioning to adulthood

- Has it ever been easy?
- Prolonged period of transition today
- Very difficult labor market for young people
- Changing definitions and norms
- New understanding of brain development
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zVS8HI>
[PUng](#)

Brain Development - The Basics

Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls "executive functions" — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature. Brain development from childhood to adulthood:



Sources: *National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging*

Thomas McKay | The Denver Post

The Developing Brain and Normalcy

| Developmental Stage | Traits | Key Decisions |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Young Child | brain connections rapid brain growth gaining motor skills gaining language | exploring a variety of experiences sound (e.g. language) building trust expand the child's world relationship building daycare and babysitting |
| Preteen | social connections physical changes | staying the night with friends attending social events gaining independence haircuts/fashion |

*Due to trauma and other developmental issues, a child's chronological age is not always an indicator of their developmental stage – discuss this with your caseworker, family members or other supports, or other professionals involved with the child or youth.

The Developing Brain and Normalcy

| Developmental Stage | Traits | Key Decisions |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Teen | finding sense of self | attending social events peer connections |
| Post Teen | brain still maturing “sense of self” solidifying societal independence | social supports giving choices regarding activities |

*Due to trauma and other developmental issues, a child’s chronological age is not always an indicator of their developmental stage – discuss this with your caseworker, family members or other supports, or other professionals involved with the child or youth.

In order to fully develop, the brain needs ...

- Interaction
 - Touch
 - Stable Relationships
 - Safe, Healthy Environments
 - Self Esteem
 - Quality Care
 - Play
 - Communication
 - Music
 - Reading
- 

RPPS applies:

Day to Day and routine/typical caregiver decisions

Extracurricular Clubs

Sports

Youth group activities

Parties and sleep-overs

Outings with peers (including dating if appropriate)

Driver's Education

Vacations with the designate parent's family or other families

School or camp field trip[s]

Summer and school break camps

Boating

Hunting

Recreational vehicle use

Rock climbing

Routine grooming or temporary changes of appearance



Permission to participate in **age and developmentally appropriate** school, extracurricular, sports, social/cultural enrichment, field trips and similar activities

Respite versus Babysitting

Respite is an approved and contracted service paid by the state
Policy regarding respite is located in [Section 4 Chapter 17](#)

Babysitting is when a parent arranges for a responsible individual
to supervise their children while they are away from the home

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting decisions include
selecting a responsible individual to watch the children
while the parents are away from the home

A babysitter is not required to complete respite training or be
approved/contracted as a respite provider

The resource parent is responsible for paying a babysitter for the
services the babysitter provides

RPPS considerations

When making decisions regarding age- or developmentally-appropriate activities, the designated parent shall take into consideration:

1. The child's age, maturity and developmental level;
2. The overall health and safety of the child;
3. Potential risk factors and appropriateness of the activity;
4. The best interests of the child;
5. Promoting, where safe and as appropriate, normal childhood experiences;

RPPS considerations

When making decisions regarding age- or developmentally-appropriate activities, the designated parent shall take into consideration:

6. The current status of the case plan, including impending reunification;
7. The health and safety of the placement provider(s) and their family;
8. The engagement level of the parent;
9. The interests and desires of the child; and
10. Other relevant factors based on the designated parent's knowledge of the child.

Residential Treatment Agencies and Group Homes

- Residential Facilities and Group homes must have at least one RPP designee but it is recommended that at least two are designated to ensure that decisions are not delayed due to the RPP's absence.
- This designee may be an administrative person assigned by the facility.
- Facilities will keep updated information on who is assigned as their RPP to ensure that youth and professionals can quickly find their RPP. Decisions shall not be delayed due to administrative reasons.

Decisions Requiring Team or Court Involvement

These are things that must still be discussed with the child's parent, FST and in some cases may require approval from the FST or court:

- Changes contrary to a child or family-specific order of the court;
- Non-routine and non-emergency medical decisions;
- Returning the child to the parent(s) or guardian(s) without court approval;
- Changing the child's school;

Decisions Requiring Team or Court Involvement

These are things that must still be discussed with the child's parent, FST and in some cases may require approval from the FST or court:

- Changing the child's religion;
- International travel
- Permanent change(s) to child's appearance including, but not limited to, tattoos, piercings, cosmetic surgery, or body modifications;
- Decisions contrary to the current case plan and permanency goal.

Youth Grievance Process

- Youth are encouraged to speak directly with their case manager and Family Support Team if a conflict arises
- Youth are able to speak directly with their Guardian Ad Litem
- Youth may choose to use the formal Children's Division Grievance Process:
<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/cwmanual/section8/ch1/sec8ch1sub1.htm>



Paradigm Shift # 1: Ensuring safety must remain a priority; however, it must be considered in an age- and developmentally-appropriate context and in a way that does not create barriers to other aspects of wellbeing.

Paradigm Shift # 2: Caregivers will be empowered to make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions rather than navigating through multiple levels of permission, authorizations to do the things that most parents routinely allow their children to do.

Reflection – Overcoming Myths

- ▶ **MYTH:** I can't go to church camp (or any other camp) because it would be impossible to complete background checks for every single person I will come in contact with.
- ▶ **FACT:** Background checks are no longer required for camp, sleep overs, proms, etc. Youth are able to go to camp if the caregiver believes it is developmentally and age appropriate

- ▶ **MYTH:** I can't go to Illinois to pick apples at Eckert's because it is crossing state lines.
- ▶ **FACT:** Youth can go across state lines for trips, including family vacations, with only permission from their caregiver. However, caseworkers should be informed.

Reflection – *Overcoming Myths*

- ▶ **MYTH:** You have to get permission from your bio parents before you cut your hair.
 - ▶ **FACT:** According to the guidebook for youth in out-of-home, “You should be able to express your desires regarding your hairstyle and changes you would like to make.”

 - ▶ **MYTH:** I can’t spend the night with a friend because I am in foster care.
 - ▶ **FACT:** Youth can spend the night at their friend’s house with approval of their caregiver without background checks or a home study
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Reflection – *Overcoming Myths*

- ▶ **MYTH:** What other myths are out there, what past practices need to change ?
- ▶ **FACT:** What will we do instead?

Training Recap

Implementation of RPPS is required by federal law and MO state statute.

RPPS applies to all foster caregivers and all placement settings; group homes and residential facilities are not exempt.

RPPS applies to routine and typical parenting duties but there are areas of further discussion where it does not apply.

Birth parents are important; they have a say in many decisions.

RPPS supports the healthy growth and development of children and youth.

Children's Division and partners are accountable for insuring that RPPS is implemented and that children and youth have access to age and developmentally appropriate activities.

ANY
QUESTIONS
?

Contact your Licensing Worker or the Case Manager for a child placed in the your home

References and more info:

- <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/data/fact-sheet-on-hr-4980.pdf>
- <http://www.cssp.org/policy/2014/A-GUIDE-FOR-STATES-IMPLEMENTING-THE-PREVENTING-SEX-TRAFFICKING-AND-STRENGTHENING-FAMILIES-ACT-HR-4980.pdf>
- <https://www.fosterclub.com/training/promoting-normalcy>

This Certificate is awarded to

*For successful completion of
Two hour Reasonable and Prudent
Parenting Standard Training*



Resource Parent

Date



Resource Development Worker Date