Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard (RPPS)

Out-of-home placements are not “normal” living situations for youth and consequently increase the need for normal opportunities to be provided. In September 2014, President Obama signed H.R. 4980, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. In Missouri during the 2016 legislative session, HB 1877 was passed which supports compliance of the federal legislation.

The legislation empowers resource providers to act as the parental authority in making decisions which would normally be made daily by parents of children not in alternative care. The law is intended to reduce stigma attached to youth in foster care by increasing opportunities for extracurricular and social activity participation – all of which are part of developing life skills, interests as well as building relationships and life-long connections.

Integrating RPPS into Children’s Division Practice

Over time, various practices have developed throughout child welfare which interfere with the rights of youth in foster care to experience “normalcy”. Best practice in achieving normalcy for foster youth includes engagement of the youth and youth’s parents in talking through, in a co-parenting role, many decisions in a child’s life but, ultimately, the resource parent acting in their role as the designated caregiver or reasonable and prudent parent to make decisions about a youth’s daily life just as they would for their own child. While most youth take these activities and experiences for granted, these “normal” experiences help youth develop interests, acquire skills, and build lasting, supportive relationships. As part of this normalcy, the Division and Resource Providers will recognize that the opportunity for mistakes by youth is also a part of positive and normal development. Due to real and perceived constraints, foster youth are often denied the chance to participate in the everyday activities essential for their successful transition to adulthood. Consequently, youth who “age out” of the foster care system experience worse life outcomes than their peers, including homelessness, unemployment, and poverty. Resource providers, although expected to keep a youth’s safety in mind, should allow youth living in their home or facility to experience a variety of activities just as other parents do for their children.

Submitted by Amy Martin, Adoption/Resource Licensing Program Manager
“Before, I was told by my caseworkers I couldn't spend the night at a friend's house or take pictures at events. Also, I was told to change my date of birth on my Facebook and take my name down and put a nickname - but now I can take pictures at school. I have been on Facebook with my actual name and birthday and I can go to a friend's house without having a background check.”

Dillon, Kansas City Region

“Well, because of this new normalcy act, it made it easier for me to come down to Arkansas for my cousin’s wedding without a chaperone or background checks. It’s been great because it makes me feel as though I’m not even in care. I can just be here like I would normally be if I wasn't in care.”

Faith, NE Region

“A youth wanted to go on a float trip with the pre-adoptive family’s parents (soon to be grandparents after the adoption is finalized). The FST said they would not have time to complete the background checks for the youth to go on the float trip. The normalcy legislation helped to make it possible for the youth to have a great time with their pre-adoptive family.”

Bobbie Thomas, SE OYTS

“In helping me feel normal, my (foster) mom has been the most helpful. She’s always allowed me to do what she would have let her own children do. I’ve never really been in a situation where I wasn't allowed to do something due to the fact that I am in care.”

Alex, SE Area

“The only problem that I have had is the having a background check but now my (foster) parents are more lenient towards not doing that and focusing on normalcy and they were shocked when I had told them about that no background checks are needed and my case worker didn't think it was true but I told her it very much was.”

Shelby, SE Region

“Tomorrow I get to go to the movies with a friend.”

Katalyne, SE Area

Submitted by Sally Gaines, Older Youth Program Development Specialist

Click here for more responses from Foster Youth and Staff

A Letter From An Aging Out Foster Child To Other Foster Children

Available RPPS Online Training

Guidance is available for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting for Youth in Foster Care at:

This training is designed to be used with resource parents, residential care staff, youth and Children’s Division staff to familiarize all with the intents, actions, limitations and outcomes of parenting foster youth in this way.

Just Ask...Voices of Older Youth

Issues and Impact Relating to RPPS Legislation

Scaling Questions for Discussion

From a scale from 0 to 10, 0 is unprepared and 10 is highly prepared:

How prepared is your county/circuit to assist staff in the transitioning to the use of reasonable and prudent parenting standards to promote normalcy for foster youth? To assist placement providers? To assist community stakeholders? To assist youth?

- What are the strengths/ resources in your community to help this transition?
- What are the challenges/barriers to transitioning?
- What needs to happen to better prepare and/or better serve out youth in foster care?
The 2016 Survey of Employee Engagement asked staff to respond to the statement “We use feedback from those we serve to improve our performance”. Overall, the Children’s Division’s response to this statement was 3.34, indicating more staff agreed than disagreed that the agency uses feedback from those we serve to improve our performance. The Five Domains of Wellbeing are the universal, interdependent and non-hierarchical essential needs we all have. Two of the Five Domains of Well-Being, Social Connectedness and Mastery, are especially important to consider as youth are growing toward independence. Social connectedness is important because both the sum of individual relationships and a sense of belonging are crucial to overall health and well-being. Likewise, a person’s sense of mastery changes over time as a result of encountering and navigating challenging situations successfully and acquiring new skills. The “Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard” gives designated caregivers authority to decide which social encounters would be in the best interest of the foster youth in their care.

During this quarter’s CQI meeting, consider how you can use feedback from foster youth, biological parents, designated caregivers and family support team members to support our foster care youth in creating social connections and achieving mastery.

For more information on the SEE and result from prior years follow this link: [Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE)](https://example.com).

Submitted by Joni Ralph MAS II, Quality Assurance Unit
The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is a comprehensive review of public child welfare systems initiated by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with the goal of ultimately helping states improve their child welfare services and enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The CFSR is a two-step review process:

- **Statewide Assessment** – states are given the opportunity to evaluate themselves on specific outcomes and systemic factors. Data profiles are provided by ACF to help guide states in assessing performance with certain safety and permanency expectations.

- **On-Site Review** – in addition to reviewing the case file, interviews with children, families and stakeholders associated with the selected cases will be completed. Three circuits have been selected to host the CFSR during the week of July 24, 2017.
  - Kansas City
  - Jasper County
  - St. Charles County

Each Children’s Division staff member plays an important role in the outcome of the CFSR. All children and families served by CD are represented in the data profile we use to inform the statewide assessment. Whether your role is to advocate for children’s best interests with the court, support workers as they help families make safe decisions for the children who remain in the home or make sure hotline reports are called to the field in a timely manner so children’s safety can be assured, we all have a part in making the CFSR a success and helping the Children’s Division shine.

For more information on the CFSR, please visit [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews) or contact JoDene Bogart, CFSR Coordinator, at JoDene.Bogart@dss.mo.gov.

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**Early Childhood Corner**

**Community Collaboration**

The Early Childhood and Prevention Services Section of Children’s Division works diligently to foster community collaboration through child care authorizations and quality and prevention programs.

Children entering the foster care system often need an authorization to a licensed child care facility in order to allow the foster parents to continue working without disruption. Melissa Wolfe is the Program Development Specialist assigned to assist county offices with completing the authorizations in FACES so there is a seamless transition. In the event a child was already authorized to a facility because the parent previously received or applied for child care assistance; Melissa can assist with closing that authorization to allow the new facility to be authorized. Melissa also provides assistance if the child care provider has not been approved to accept child care subsidy payments by explaining the steps necessary to complete the contract. Once the contract has been received the Child Care Provider Relations Unit processes the contract application. Having available contracted child care facilities help to foster community collaboration by allowing our parents and foster families to continue to provide for their families and to connect with their local community service providers.

The quality programs include Educare, Early Head Start, Parentlink, Child Care Aware, OPEN, Home Visiting, and Crisis Care. Our providers are encouraged to get to know the communities in which they serve, and to build connections with community partners by learning about their programs, developing resource connections, and including community partners in planning and/or events whenever possible. Having community partners allows the families and children to be linked with a variety of resources to fit their needs and address their concerns.

For further information regarding any of our quality programs please feel free to contact Tasha Toebben at tasha.toebben@dss.mo.gov or 573-526-3899.

Submitted by Nancy Reid, Statewide Home Visiting Program Manager
**COA CORNER**

**PA-FKC 9.02**—Resource parents provide children in care with:

a. nurturing family relationships that promote positive attachment;
b. a pleasant and safe atmosphere and a space in their room to personalize;
c. a physical environment and materials that support their development;
d. nutritious meals and snacks;
e. clothing that is clean, seasonal, age-appropriate, and comfortable;
f. age- and developmentally-appropriate boundaries, supervision, and discipline;
g. an orderly but flexible daily schedule that provides opportunities for positive participation in age- and developmentally-appropriate educational, cultural, social, recreational, and community activities;
a. regular access to a telephone to contact workers, advocates, service providers and approved family and friends; and
b. personal needs and an allowance, as appropriate.

Interpretation: Resource parents should maintain a welcoming, safe, and nonjudgmental environment after each episode of running away.

**PA-FKC 9.06**—Opportunities are provided for children to:

a. participate in ethnic, cultural, and religious activities and develop a sense of identity consistent with their cultural, ethnic, or native traditions;
a. experience social, cultural, and recreational activities characteristic of resource parents’ community;
b. participate in age- and developmentally-appropriate group activities to meet, support, and share positive experiences with peers; and
a. participate in age- and developmentally-appropriate educational, after-school programs or independent living activities.

**PA-FKC 9.08**—In an age- and developmentally-appropriate manner, the agency works with children, parents, and resource families to promote children’s self-sufficiency, informed decision making, and readiness to assume responsibility for:

a. activities of daily living;
b. household management and obtaining housing;
c. obtaining and maintaining employment;
d. money management, including budgeting, saving, investing, buying on credit, and debt counseling;
e. accessing community resources;
f. navigating public assistance and other governmental programs; and

g. effective interpersonal communication and conflict resolution.

Interpretation: The standard is applicable for all children regardless of age. **PA-FKC 13** provides further detail as to the services and supports provided to youth as they move towards the transition to adulthood.

Submitted by Tiffany Moore, Quality Improvement Unit Manager

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**Supervision Advisory Committee**

The Supervision Advisory Committee met on November 9, 2016. The committee invited a member of the Leadership and Professional Development team to discuss options for on the job training for supervisors within each region. The committee also met with Sheila Tannehill, Fiscal Liaison to learn more about the caseload analysis process and the impact of reporting across regions. The committee members discussed the strategic action plan and goals. Please see the [SAC intranet page](#) for additional information on strategic plan updates.

Submitted by Tiffany Moore Quality Improvement Unit Manager

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**CHILDREN’S DIVISION MISSION STATEMENT**

To protect Missouri children from abuse and neglect; assuring their safety and well being by partnering with families, communities and government in an ethically, culturally and socially responsible manner.