

# Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care

An Overview of the  
Reasonable and Prudent  
Parent Standard  
in Missouri



# Agenda

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- Federal and State Laws
- Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards (RPPS)
  - Fundamentals
  - Definitions
  - Brain Development
  - Non-negotiables
  - RPPS and Residential
  - Youth Grievance Process
  - References

## Learning Objectives

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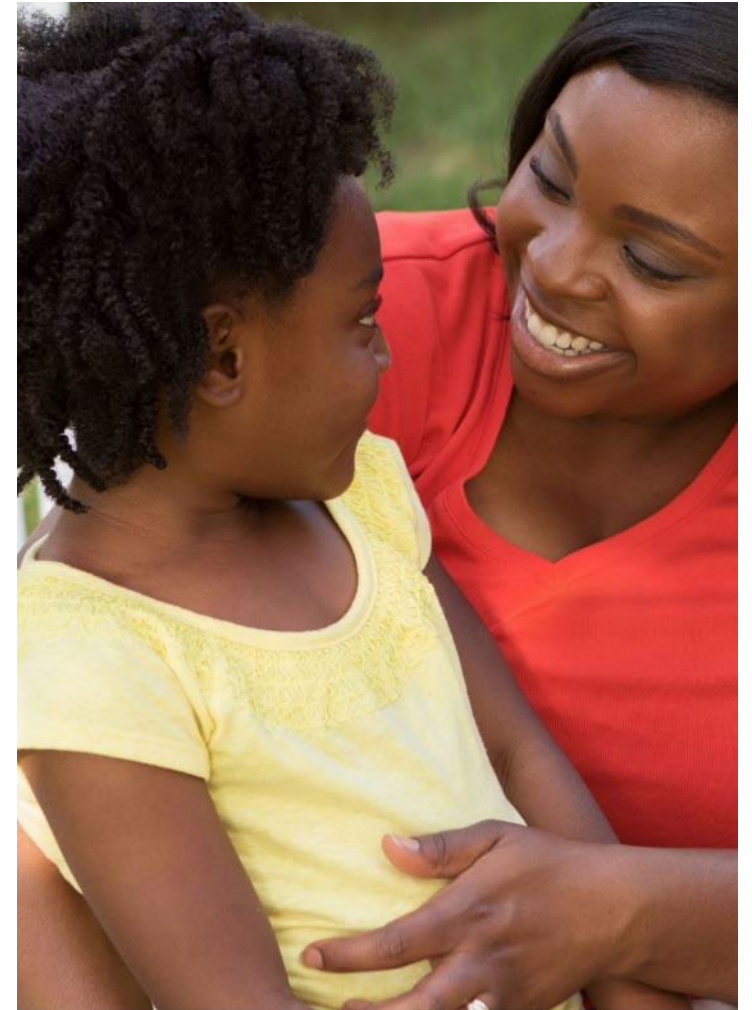
- Recognize the Federal and State Laws surrounding RPPS
- Recognize the Child Welfare Policy as it relates to RPPS and how it began
- Recall the main goals of RPPS
- Reference the adolescent brain development process
- Recall the grievance process for youth in foster care

## Federal and State Law

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Federal Law requires the designated state authority (or authorities) to:

1. Develop a **reasonable and prudent parenting standard (RPPS)** 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 childcare institution, receiving funds under **Title IV: Part E.**



## Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS)

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RPPS should be employed by any caregiver/foster parent who, under the responsibility of the state, is determining whether or not to allow a child to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural and/or social activities.

The **Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard** states that a caregiver shall make **careful** and **sensible** parental decisions that maintain the **health, safety, and best interests of the child**, in addition to encouraging the **emotional** and **developmental** growth of the child.



## Laws that support RPPS

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Federal law was created to ensure children in foster care receive as close to a normal family and home-life as possible. Engaging in normal activities without interference from agencies promotes this ideal.

- [Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#) (HR 4980 - 2014)
- [Missouri House Bill 1877](#) (2016)
- [State Statute 210.660](#)



## Voices of Youth: *Normalcy Matters*

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“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 always want to get everything approved by a judge, such as vacations and hair dye.”



## Voices of Youth: *Normalcy Matters*

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“They [foster parents] let my friends come over and they let me go with my friends. And they let me dress how I want to 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 they care. Also, it adds a sense of normalcy because a **‘normal’** child would have parents attend these school functions.”



## The Goal: Normalcy

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**Normalcy** is defined as activities that are age, or developmentally, appropriate. This includes:

- Extracurricular activities
- Social activities
- Cultural activities
- Other enrichment activities



Watch [this video](#) to hear about normalcy from a youth in foster care.

## The Mysterious Workings of the Adolescent Brain

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As adolescents transition to adulthood, fundamental changes occur in their brain.

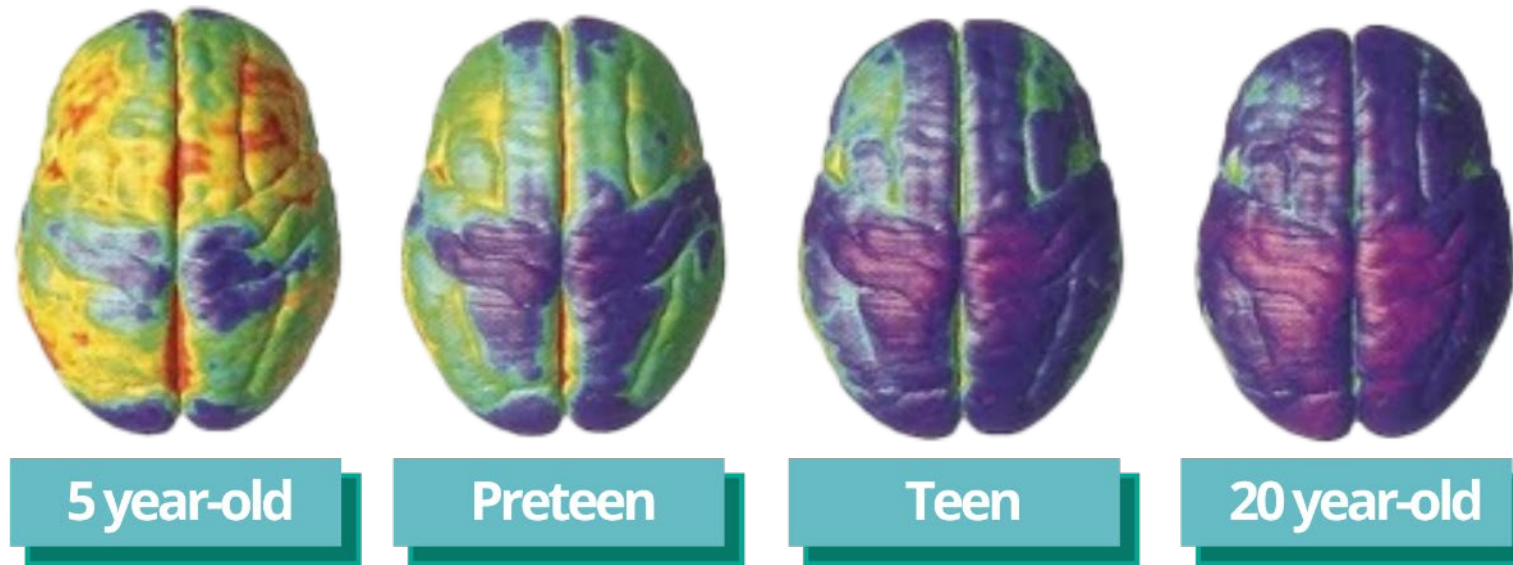
Today's youth experience:

- Prolonged periods of transition
- Unpredictable labor market
- Changing norms



Watch [this video](#) to learn more about basic, adolescent brain development.

# Brain Development from childhood to adulthood







red/yellow =  
parts of the  
brain less  
mature



blue/purple =  
parts of the  
brain more  
fully mature

When considering brain development, it is important to note that **judgement** is the last function to develop.

# Developing Brain and Normalcy

Developmental Stage	Traits	Key Decisions
<b>Young Child</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain connections</li> <li>• Rapid brain growth</li> <li>• Developing motor skills</li> <li>• Developing language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various experiences</li> <li>• Sound (e.g. language)</li> <li>• Building trust</li> <li>• Expanding the child's world</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• Daycare and/or babysitting</li> </ul>
<b>Preteen</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing social connections</li> <li>• Experience physical changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overnight stays (e.g. sleepovers)</li> <li>• Attending social events</li> <li>• Gaining independence</li> <li>• Haircuts/fashion</li> </ul>
<b>Teen</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending social events</li> <li>• Peer connections</li> </ul>
<b>Post Teen</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain is still maturing</li> <li>• Solidifying societal independence through sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social supports</li> <li>• Giving choices regarding activities</li> </ul>

\*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.

# Healthy Brain Development

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- Interaction
- Touch
- Stable relationships
- Safe, healthy environments
- Self esteem
- Quality care
- Play
- Communication
- Music
- Reading

## Routines and Caregiver Decisions

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RPPS must apply to everyday routines and typical caregiver decisions. Examples include:

- Extracurricular clubs
- Sports
- Youth group activities
- Parties and sleepovers
- Outings with peers (including dating, if appropriate)
- Drivers education
- Vacations (with the designated parents or other families)
- School, camps and field-trips
- Recreational vehicle use
- Routine grooming or temporary changes to appearance

Always consider what is **age** and **developmentally appropriate** when making these decisions.



## Respite versus Babysitting

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Responsible and Prudent Parenting decisions include choosing a responsible individual to watch the child(ren) while you are away.

Options include:

- **Respite Care:** This is an approved and contracted service paid by the state. **Review** Section 6, Chapter 17 of the [Missouri Child Welfare Manual](#) for more information.
- **Babysitting:** This is when a parent arranges for a responsible individual to watch their child(ren) while they are away from 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 sitter provides.

## RPPS Considerations

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When making decisions regarding age - or developmentally – appropriate activities, you should consider:

- 1 Child's age, maturity and developmental level
- 2 Overall health and safety of the child
- 3 Potential risk factors and appropriateness of the activity
- 4 Best interests of the child
- 5 Promoting normal childhood experiences where safe and appropriate

## RPPS Considerations, continued

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You should also consider:

- 6 Current status of the case plan, including impending reunification
- 7 Health and safety of the placement provider(s) and their family
- 8 Engagement level of the parent
- 9 Interests and desires of the child
- 10 Any other related factors based your knowledge of the child

## Decisions Requiring Team or Court Involvement

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There are instances where a decision must be discussed with the child's parent and Family Support Team. In some cases decisions may require approval from the Family Support Team or court, such as:

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

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- If a youth in care does not agree with a decision or feels there is a conflict, we encourage them to speak directly with their Family Support Team about the issue
- Youth can also speak directly with their Guardian Ad Litem about any concerns or issues
- Youth can also file a formal grievance using the Children's Division Grievance Process: [Section 8, Chapter 1 \(Grievance and Appeals\)](#)

## Paradigm Shifts

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**Paradigm Shift #1:** Ensuring safety must remain a priority; however, it must be considered in an age – and developmentally – appropriate context, as well as 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 permissions and/or) authorizations to do the things that most parents routinely allow their children to do.



## Reflection – Disproving Myths

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### **MYTH:**

I can't go to camp because it would be impossible to complete background checks for every person I will come into contact with.

### **FACT:**

Background checks are no longer required for camp, sleepovers, proms, etc. You are able to attend camp if your caregiver believes it is both developmentally and age appropriate.

## Reflection – Disproving Myths

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**MYTH:**

I can't go to Illinois to pick apples at Eckert's, because it's crossing state lines.

**FACT:**

You can go across state lines for trips, including family vacations, with permission from your caregiver only. We do ask that your caseworker is informed.

## Reflection – Disproving Myths

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**MYTH:**

You have to get permission from your biological parent before you cut your hair.

**FACT:**

You should be able to express your desires regarding your hairstyle and make the changes you would like to make.

## Reflection – Disproving Myths

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**MYTH:**

I can't spend the night with a friend because I'm in foster care.

**FACT:**

You can spend the night at a friend's house with your caregivers approval without background checks or a home study.

## Training Recap

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1. RPPS is required by federal law and Missouri state statute
2. RPPS applies to all foster caregivers and all placement settings (group homes and residential facilities are not exempt)
3. RPPS applies to routine and typical parenting duties, but there are certain areas where it does not apply
4. Birth parents are important and they have a say in many decisions
5. RPPS supports the healthy growth and development of children and youth
6. Children's Division and partners are accountable for making sure that RPPS is implemented and that children and youth have access to age and developmentally appropriate activities

## Training Recap

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Contact your Licensing Worker or the Case Manager for a child placed in your home for help at any time.



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# Questions?

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## Contact Info

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Presenter Name  
[email@dss.mo.gov](mailto:email@dss.mo.gov)  
573-555-5555

# Our Mission



Empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, and productive lives.

## Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care

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For successful completion of the two-hour Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard (RPPS) Training.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Resource Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Resource Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date