



Normalcy Plan for Foster Care Teens

<u>DEPARTMENT NAME:</u> Quality Management		
<u>CHAPTER:</u>	<u>SUBJECT:</u> Normalcy Plan for Foster Care Teens	<u>POLICY NUMBER:</u> QM-037
<u>APPROVAL:</u>	<u>EFFECTIVE DATE:</u> Original: 7/16/07 Revised: 8/01/08	<u>REPLACES (policy # and date):</u> Original: New policy Revised 8/08: CNSWFL policy approved on July 16, 2007

- I. **PURPOSE:** This operating procedure covers the policies and procedures relative to maximizing the authority of foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) to approve participation in age-appropriate activities of youth in the custody of licensed foster care.

- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** Supersedes the Children's Network of Southwest Florida's policy that was approved on July 16, 2007.

- III. **CONTACT:** Quality Management Department.

- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Contracted Case Management Organizations, Licensed Foster Parents, Licensed Child Placing Facilities and foster care youth.

- V. **POLICY:** It is the policy of Children's Network of Southwest Florida that a written plan be developed between the child welfare case manager, foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) and any youth in licensed foster care between the ages of 13 up to 18, which maximizes the authority of the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) to approve participation in age-appropriate activities. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) and child welfare case manager also have the ability to approve participation in age-appropriate activities for all youth below the age of 13, even though a written plan is not required.

- VI. **RATIONALE:** The rationale of this policy is to ensure normalcy for all youth in licensed foster care.

- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Florida Statute 409.1451; Florida Administrative Code 65C-30.023; Florida Administrative Code 65C-13.029; Florida Administrative Code 65C-13.033; Children's Network of Southwest Florida Policy and Procedure DC-

VIII. **PROCEDURES:**

A. General Requirements.

1. Development of written plan. The age-appropriate activities and authority of the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) shall be developed into an individualized written “teen plan” that the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s), the youth and the child welfare case manager all develop together, sign and follow. This plan must be reviewed and updated no less than quarterly or within 30 days of a placement change.
 - a. Prior to the teen plan being updated within 30 days due to a placement change, all of the structured activities agreed upon in the most current plan will continue and all unstructured activities will cease until the plan is updated with the new foster parent(s) or caregiver(s).
2. Eligibility. All youth in licensed foster care who have reached 13 years of age but are not yet 18 years of age are to participate in the written teen plan. The placement in licensed foster care includes, at a minimum, regular and therapeutic foster homes and group homes, excluding emergency shelter facilities and lock-down residential facilities.
 - a. Youth with disabilities who are placed in licensed foster care are eligible to participate in the written plan and may not be deemed ineligible on the basis of their disability.

B. Background Screening, Activities and Supervision.

1. Background screening for the purposes of participation in school, extracurricular and community activities and events is not necessary.
2. Background screening of all household members prior to an overnight stay at a friend’s home is not necessary. However, it is imperative that the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) exercise great care and diligence in making decisions about participation in such activities by youth in their care, considering age, developmental level, alert status and other factors of the youth.

3. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) must complete the following prior to an overnight stay:
 - a. Meet face-to-face with the parents of the family with whom the foster youth will be staying overnight to ensure, as best as possible, the safety of the youth.
 - b. Determine any other individuals who will be in the home during the overnight stay and ascertain, as best as possible, that they will not endanger the youth's safety.
 - c. Share all emergency contact information with the host family.
 - d. If the foster youth has any alerts, the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) must be vigilant in ensuring the overnight stay does not pose any risks to either the foster youth or anyone else in the host's home. This includes making certain that the same safe guards established for a licensed foster home are in place within the host's home.
 - e. Ensure the foster youth is only sharing a room with another youth of the same gender.
4. Background screening of a babysitter is required to include an FDLE name check, abuse registry check and a local law check. A youth aged sixteen or older who is the licensed out-of-home caregiver's legal child, a relative or neighbor, and whom the licensed out-of-home caregiver knows to be of sufficient reliability and maturity may baby-sit foster children. The length of time depends on the maturity and needs of the foster child(ren) and the maturity of the babysitter. Babysitting by sixteen to eighteen year olds will not include more than three children. A procedure shall be established for a time limit in which the licensed out-of-home caregiver will contact the babysitter periodically during his or her absence. Babysitting is limited to less than twenty-four hours in duration. Foster children shall not be permitted to provide supervision to children in the home.
5. Background screening of individuals who either regularly provide childcare or do so for extended periods of time, such as licensed or home-based childcare providers or respite homes, is required to include FBI/FDLE checks, local law checks to include any call outs to the home, clerk of court (criminal and civil), abuse registry checks, and Adam Walsh

checks if the person(s) have resided in another state within the past 5 years.

6. Either the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) or the child welfare case manager may sign permission slips for school or community activities. If an activity involves travel outside of the district, the child welfare case manager must be notified prior to the event occurring. If the activity involves travel out of the state, court approval must be obtained prior to the event occurring.
7. If the youth wants to participate in swimming or other water related activities, there must be adult supervision at all times. For any other high risk activities, the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) must obtain prior approval from the child welfare case manager.
8. Concerns about confidentiality should not routinely prevent a foster youth from receiving public recognition, including having their photograph or name appear in a normal school or community publication or article. However, if that such publication or article includes mention of the youth's foster care status or that the youth is dependent of the Department of Children and Families all necessary and appropriate formal consents and releases must be obtained. In addition, the child welfare case manager must receive prior notice of any media event in which the youth's name or photograph will be used.
9. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) has the authority to make a decision regarding whether or not youth, who are at least 13 years of age or older, can stay home for a limited time, not overnight, without adult supervision, excluding youth in specialized therapeutic foster care. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) must take into account the youth's age, development and maturity level, their familiarity with the youth and the youth's comfort level with being home alone when determining if it is appropriate and the length of time. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) must also provide all emergency contact information to the youth and ensure the youth knows how to follow safety practices. If a youth is 16 years of age or older, the youth may babysit, however, they are not permitted to provide supervision to children in the home they are residing in.
10. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) can decide whether or not to provide a house key to youth in their care. If they decide against it, they must make provisions for the youth to have shelter if arriving home before other family members or staff or in an emergency situation.
11. Youth who are 13 years of age or older may be dropped off at public destinations to meet other peers without an accompanying adult, excluding youth placed in specialized therapeutic foster care. However, the foster

parent(s) or caregiver(s) must determine if that is appropriate given the youth's developmental and maturity level, alert status, history of responsible behavior and other such factors. If the youth is not meeting peers and will be alone, the youth must be 16 years of age or older and the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) has determined that it is appropriate given the factors listed above. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) also has to determine that the area is safe, appropriate and that the youth has reliable means of communication. The foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) and youth should also agree upon a reasonable time to be picked-up.

12. Youth who are 14 years of age or older may be allowed to seek and obtain employment opportunities. If the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) are unable to transport the child to and from work then employment will be contingent on the youth's ability to obtain an alternative means of transportation.

C. Allowances and Possessions.

1. All children in foster care, starting at age 6, are to have a minimum allowance, which is not to be reduced as a punishment or for disciplinary reasons. Additional money may be provided as a reward for good behavior. However, this would be determined by the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s).
2. Providing a minimum allowance is a legal requirement and is not intended to discourage the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) and other community agencies from providing items, activities or funds to youth.
3. Providing toiletries, toys or other tangible items in lieu of money is not permitted. Allowance money should also not include money needed to purchase toiletries. These items should be provided without cost, or additional money should be provided to purchase them. Hair and skin products should also be specific to meet the needs of the youth's heritage culture. To ensure appropriate products are obtained, trans-racial placements should access resources to promote cultural ties.
4. A youth's allowance money should not be used for certain educational or school items and activities that other youth typically enjoy, such as prom expenses, school pictures, year books, team uniforms, trips, etc. If the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) does not have the means, the child welfare case manager should contact the Children's Network of Southwest Florida for possible assistance.
5. Donations to organizations from a youth's allowance should only occur when permitted by the youth.

6. If a youth earns money from employment, their allowance should not cease.
7. Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) are encouraged to help youth get bank accounts and make deposits, save their money and to learn other money management skills. Youth are to obtain a Florida identification card and bank account by 17 years of age. The Independent Living Program can provide assistance with this.
8. Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) are encouraged to help youth personalize their living spaces to express their individual preferences and to ensure that their possessions are kept safe.
9. It is recommended that youth in foster care have access to means of communication, such as telephones, computers, email, etc. Appropriate provisions also need to be established to ensure the youth are accessing safe sites and, whenever possible, the computer should be placed in a common area of the home.

D. Curfew.

1. Once a foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) determines that a youth can safely travel in the community without being accompanied by an adult, a curfew should be established for that youth. As with other decisions, the caregiver must take into account factors such as any legally required curfews in a specific area, the youth's age, developmental and maturity level, history of behaviors, extracurricular activities and the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s)'s level of familiarity with the youth. The curfew must be determined and agreed upon by all parties and included in the written teen plan.
2. Youth must be provided with transportation home even when they have stayed out past curfew. If the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) is not available to pick up the youth, other arrangements must be made. Refusing transportation home or reporting a child as missing should not be used as a punishment for exceeding curfew. It may, however, be appropriate to report a youth as missing if he or she has not returned home after a reasonable amount of time past their agreed upon curfew and if a current safe location can not be verified.

E. Dating.

1. Every youth in foster care is an individual, each with a different level of maturity and needs. It is important to provide youth with as normal an upbringing as possible with consideration given to those different needs. Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) are thus generally encouraged to allow youth to have age appropriate experiences and relationships, which includes dating.
2. Factors to consider when deciding whether a youth is ready for dating include his or her age, developmental and maturity level and history of behaviors.
3. It is recommended that the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) have age appropriate conversations with youth about safe sex and birth control practices, including abstinence.

F. Privacy.

1. Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) are encouraged to allow youth age appropriate private space and communications, with consideration given to therapeutic needs, safety plans and court orders which may impose some limits.

G. Entertainment.

1. Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) are encouraged to allow youth to make age appropriate choices with respect to media activities, such as movies, video games, music, magazines and internet usage. Youth should generally be allowed to choose entertainment that reflects his or her own taste and preference. Ratings and parental warnings or guidelines should be followed; however, the foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) should also take into account the youth's developmental and maturity level, potential sensitivity to certain subject matter and other relative factors. No youth should be forced into a particular type of activity.

IX. **EXHIBITS:**

Exhibit A: Teen Plan



Teen Plan

Note: The teen plan outlines age appropriate activities for all youth ages 13 up to 18 who are in licensed foster care. This plan must be individualized and developed in collaboration with the youth, caregiver and child welfare case manager. Section II of the teen plan must be reviewed and updated quarterly. Sections I and II must be updated whenever there is a placement change.

SECTION I:

YOUTH'S DEMOGRAPHICS:

Name: _____ DOB/Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Male Female

CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT:

Regular Foster Home Therapeutic Foster Home Group Home

Other: _____

Name of placement: _____

Length of time in current placement: _____

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION:

What type of school are you currently enrolled in?

MIDDLE SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL GED COLLEGE
 VO-TECH

Name of School: _____

Are you currently involved in extracurricular activities? YES NO

If Yes, What: _____

Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school? YES NO

If Yes, When: _____ Why: _____

EMPLOYMENT STATUS:

- I am working part-time I am working full-time
 I am looking for a job I need help to maintain a job
 I am unable to work because: _____

MENTAL HEALTH:

Have you ever had a problem with or received treatment for the use of drugs or alcohol?

- YES NO

If Yes, What? _____ When? _____

Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for a major mental illness? YES NO

If Yes, What? _____ When? _____

Are you now or have you ever attended counseling or therapy? YES NO

If Yes, for What? _____ Where? _____

Are you currently taking any psychotropic medication? YES NO

If Yes, What? _____

RESTRICTIONS / DJJ:

Are you restricted from any community locations? YES NO

If Yes, Where? _____ Why? _____

Do you have DJJ involvement? YES NO

If Yes, are you on probation? _____ For how long? _____

Signature of Youth

Date

Signature of Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s)

Date

Signature of Child Welfare Case Manager

Date



Teen Plan

Name: _____ DOB/Age: _____

Note: The teen plan outlines age appropriate activities for all youth ages 13 up to 18 who are in licensed foster care. This plan must be individualized and developed in collaboration with the youth, caregiver and child welfare case manager. Section II of the teen plan must be reviewed and updated quarterly. Sections I and II must be updated whenever there is a placement change.

SECTION II:

ACTIVITIES AND SUPERVISION:

A. Structured Activities (i.e. extracurricular and community activities, work, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

B. Unstructured Activities (includes all other activities not listed above)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CURFEW:

1. Weekday Curfew: _____
2. Weekend Curfew: _____
3. Holiday Curfew: _____

STRENGTHS AND NEEDS *(This section is to be completed by the caregiver and should include the youth's strengths and needs, as assessed by the caregiver):*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

In signing this Teen Plan, I acknowledge:

- I have participated in the development of this Teen Plan.
- I have received a copy of this Teen Plan.

Signature of Youth

Date

Signature of Foster parent(s) or caregiver(s)

Date

Signature of Child Welfare Case Manager

Date