

# Promoting Normalcy: Applying the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard

## Introduction:

All children in out-of-home care deserve the right to normalcy. It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the child's life to promote and encourage normalcy by allowing the child to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities. Out-of-home care providers can promote normalcy for children placed in their care by using the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to make decisions about the child's participation in extra-curricular, enrichment, cultural, social, and recreational activities; including transportation, employment, peer relationships, and personal expression.

### Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Considerations:

- ❖ Age, maturity, and development
- ❖ Potential risk factors
- ❖ Best interest of the child
- ❖ Growth
- ❖ Family-like living experience
- ❖ Child's behavioral history
- ❖ Court order/Legal considerations
- ❖ Cultural, religious, tribal values

Every reasonable and prudent parenting decision should be child specific and situation specific. Each decision should be made on a case-by-case basis and the out-of-home care provider should weigh all of the available information against the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard considerations.

Whenever appropriate, reasonable and prudent parenting decisions should be made with active communication and consultation with birth parents, adoptive parents, or guardians of the child. While their permission is not required for reasonable and prudent parenting decisions, the parent/guardian may have valuable insight about the child that may help you make decisions, and will allow them to remain an active part of the child's life. The parent/guardian does not have to be called or consulted for every individual decision, but their values and input should be taken into consideration.

Out-of-home care providers should also include children in decision making. Not only does this improve independent living skills, it empowers children to be involved in their own planning. Children may have a different opinion on the appropriateness of an activity or whether it is in their best interest. Out-of-home care providers maintain the ability to say "no" to an activity a child would like to participate in, as long as it is a reasonable and prudent parenting decision.

If an out-of-home care provider does not have enough information about a child to make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision, they should contact the child's caseworker or to discuss the decision. Agencies cannot require an out-of-home care provider to obtain prior approval for a reasonable and prudent parenting decision. If an out-of-home care provider would like to approve an activity that promotes normalcy that crosses any existing court orders and/or rulings and decisions related to visitation, therapy, the permanency plan, or other related activities and schedules, the out-of-home care provider should discuss the activity with the child's caseworker.

## Questions to Consider:

Out-of-home care providers should ask themselves the following questions when making a reasonable and prudent parenting decision for a child placed in their care. The following questions are not the only questions that out-of-home care providers should ask themselves, and no single question is necessarily the deciding factor for approving a particular activity.

### Age, maturity, and developmental considerations

- Do I know enough about the child's developmental/medical history?
- Would other children of the same age be allowed to participate in this activity?
- Does the child show mature decision making?
- Does the child have any developmental delays that would impact this decision?

**Potential risk factor considerations**

- Who will be attending/supervising this activity?
- Does the child have adequate training and safety equipment for this activity?
- Can the child protect him/herself and know how to respond in an emergency?
- Have I given the child enough information to safely participate in the activity?

**Best interest of the child considerations**

- Is this an activity the child is interested in participating in?
- Does approving this activity only serve my interests?
- Will this activity trigger any trauma reactions for the child?

**Cultural, religious, and tribal value considerations**

- Will this violate any of the child's/family's cultural, religious, or tribal values?
- Will this activity promote cultural, religious, or tribal growth for the child?
- Will this allow the child to explore their own cultural, religious or tribal values?
- Have I consulted with the child's parents and families about their values?

**Growth considerations**

- Will this promote the child's cognitive, social, emotional, or educational growth?
- Will this allow the child to further explore and pursue his/her interests?
- Will this activity safely allow the child to "fail" and learn from his/her experience?
- Will this activity teach the child independent living skills?

**Family-like living situation considerations**

- Would I allow my biological or adopted child to participate in this activity?
- Have I allowed other children in my home to participate in this type of activity?
- Will this activity help to make the child feel included?

**Child's behavioral history considerations**

- Does the child demonstrate responsible behavior for their age and capabilities?
- Does the child understand parental expectations and consequences?
- Does the child have a history of risky behavior?

**Court-order/Legal considerations**

- Will this activity violate a court order?
- Is this a decision only a legal guardian can make?
- Will this activity interfere with any visitations, appointments, or treatment plans?
- Will this activity violate any laws, policies, or administrative code restrictions?