

OCFP Office of Child and Family Policy	Department of Children and Family Services	
	Index No: 99.22	Issuance Date: November 19, 1999
	Origin of Request: Division of Foster Care and Permanency Services	
	Distribution: X, Z, C-3	
	Key Words: Licensed Foster Family Homes, Unlicensed Relative Care, Babysitting	
Approved by:		

Interpretation

Question: Are there any special requirements or background checks that must be met when a babysitter is needed for a few hours to care for a child in a licensed foster family home or an unlicensed relative home?

Applicable To: Licensed Foster Family Homes and Unlicensed Relative Homes

Policy Citation: 402.2 Definitions - "Respite foster care" means temporary (not to exceed 30 days), full-time care in a licensed foster family home, group home, or child care institution, or in a license exempt relative home, when such temporary, full-time care is provided to foster children. Respite foster care is provided to foster children in order to give the full-time caregivers a rest from caregiving responsibilities and to prevent placement disruption.

402.16 Meeting Basic Needs of Children

- b) Children shall receive supervision appropriate to their age at all times. All children in the foster home shall be protected from exploitation, neglect, and abuse. Suspected child abuse or neglect shall be reported to the supervising agency and to the Department immediately.
- d) Care shall be exercised in giving permission for the foster child to visit overnight with friends or relatives of the child or foster parent(s). Extended trips away from the foster home must be approved by the foster child's parent or guardian.

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Discussion: The Department's rules and procedures do not mandate any special requirements for babysitters of foster children. In an ordinary situation in which a babysitter is needed for a few hours, the foster parent or relative caregiver may select the babysitter. The babysitter does not have to be licensed as a child care provider. The foster parent or relative caregiver is, however, responsible for exercising good judgement and insuring the chosen babysitter is an adequate caregiver, taking into consideration the ages, numbers and needs of the children. The Department does not reimburse foster parents or relative caregivers for babysitting fees.

Subsection 402.16 covers overnight visits. Since overnight visitations do not require a CANTS check, a CANTS check is not required for short-term babysitting.

Babysitting is distinguishable from respite care. Respite care is a planned service to the foster parents that requires the respite provider to be in compliance with Part 402 and be a licensed foster parent. Babysitting is not child care (day care). Child care is ongoing, planned care for children while caregivers are at work or otherwise engaged on a regular basis and unable to care for the children. When regular child care is needed for foster children, and when the Department is paying for that child care, the caregiver must be licensed. A license exempt caregiver may only be used when a CANTS check has been completed and approval has been secured in accordance with Procedures 359, Appendix E, Employment Related Day Care for Foster Parents.

There is no law that defines the age at which a person may babysit. Foster parents and relative caregivers must assess the maturity and capability of the individual that will be babysitting, as well as the ages and numbers of children to be supervised, the length of time care will be provided, and any special needs of the children. The following questions should be considered when selecting a babysitter:

- Is the person physically capable of taking care of and protecting the children?
- Is the person capable of recognizing and avoiding danger and making sound decisions?
- Does the person know what to do and who to call if a problem or emergency arises?

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- Is there an adult nearby who can be physically available within ten minutes in the event of an emergency?

Response: When a babysitter is needed for a few hours to care for a foster child, the foster parent or relative caregiver may select the babysitter. A CANTS check is not necessary, but the foster parent or relative caregiver shall use good judgement in selecting an individual that is an adequate caregiver, taking into consideration the ages and number of children to be supervised, the length of time care is expected, and any special needs of the children.

The foster parent or relative caregiver shall leave an emergency telephone or pager number where he or she may be reached. Whenever possible, a responsible adult who can be physically on site within ten minutes should be identified that the babysitter can call upon.