

# NORMALCY POLICY LETS FOSTER PARENTS MAKE “NORMAL” DECISIONS



Every child in DCFS care is special, but he or she is still a normal child. Often that child wants (and needs) to have normal childhood experiences through normal activities like sleepovers with friends, going on vacation or playing on sports teams. In June, the department authorized all caregivers for all youth in out-of-home placements to use “Normalcy Parenting and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard” to give or withhold permission for age-appropriate enrichment, extracurricular and social activities.

Normalcy parenting empowers caregivers to make common decisions without seeking prior approval or consent from the permanency worker or other child welfare staff. The goal is to allow children in care the opportunity for normal growth and development through activities that would be typical for all children. The new Policy Guide 2017.07 includes definitions and examples of the types of decisions caregivers can make using the reasonable and prudent parenting standard. It also covers the instances where

specific state or federal laws limit the consent authorization to DCFS, such as consenting to medical and dental care, and disclosing mental health information.

In a system so bound by rules, there still cannot be a specific list of rules to cover every parenting decision. Rather, the reasonable and prudent parent standard balances careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child, while at the same time encourages the emotional and developmental growth of the child.

The policy guide reflects many foster parents’ concerns and practical considerations. As different situations arise, caregivers and case managers should approach decisions taking these factors into account:

- The child’s age, maturity, and developmental level to promote the overall health, safety, and best interests of the child.
- The best interest of the child based on information known by the caregiver.

- The importance and fundamental value of encouraging the child’s emotional and developmental growth gained through participation in activities in his or her community;
- The importance and fundamental value of providing the child with the most family-like living experience possible; and
- The child’s behavioral history and ability to safely participate in the proposed activity.
















A caregiver is not liable for harm caused to a child in care who participates in an activity approved by the caregiver, provided that the caregiver has acted as a reasonable and prudent parent in granting permission. Caseworkers should discuss normalcy at each visit to the foster home. Caregivers can also take the on-demand training course on Reasonable and Prudent Parenting on the Virtual Training Center VTC at [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org).

*(see chart on next page)*

# CONSENT GUIDELINES FOR COMMON SITUATIONS

This table, excerpted from Policy Guide 2017.07 Appendix A, provides examples of common situations when foster parents can consent as part of “normalcy” and when the DCFS Guardian or an Authorized Agent must provide consent. It is not intended to be exhaustive, since it is impossible to predict every potential event that may arise in a child’s life. If an event is not listed in Appendix A, the caregiver should consult with the permanency worker. If necessary, the permanency worker or supervisor can consult with the Office of the DCFS Guardian.

A full copy of the policy guide Normalcy Parenting and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard with the appendix is available on the DCFS website [www.dcf.illinois.gov](http://www.dcf.illinois.gov) under the *About Us* tab.

Activity or situation to consider for consent:	Foster Parent	DCFS Guardian	Additional details
 Athletic participation: school extracurricular or recreational	●		
 Behavioral/Mental Health Services for a child/youth in care under age 18		●	or an Authorized Agent. Youth ages 12-18 must also consent to release their mental health info.
 Dating	●		
 Driver’s license / Learner’s permit	●		Foster Parent viewed as the “responsible adult” under Illinois Driver Licensing Law
 Media requests: Release forms or requests to interview child/youth in care		●	
 Overnight/Sleepovers, less than 48 hours (e.g., at friend’s home or other planned activity)	●		
 Release of Liability forms		●	or an Authorized Agent
 Routine school activities: field trips, school enrollment, report cards	●		
 School extra-curricular activities (including athletic participation)	●		
 School photos and yearbook pictures	●		Photographs are allowed. However captions or other information cannot identify the child as being in foster care.
 School suspension / Expulsion notices		●	Notify the DCFS Guardian
 Social media – Facebook, Instagram, etc.	●		
 Travel with the caregiver in-state and out of state, no more than 48 hours	●		
 Travel more than 48 hours	●		Foster Parent must notify caseworker with location and contact information
 Travel out of state, 30 days or more		●	