

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare  
Division of Family and Community Services  
Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard (RPPS)

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*Caregivers shall apply the reasonable and prudent parenting standard (RPPS) when determining whether to allow a child in foster care to participate in particular extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. This includes assessing and approving the plan of supervision for youth engaging in activities while not under the direct supervision or oversight of the caregiver.*

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## What is RPPS?

The standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child that a caregiver must use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the state to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, or social activities.

## How should the RPPS be applied?

1. Day-to-day and routine/typical caregiving decisions
2. Permission to participate in school, extracurricular, sports, social / cultural enrichment, field trips and similar activities.

**\*Please note any activity in which a medical release for treatment needs to be signed must be completed by the agency and/or birth parents.**

## What is not covered by the RPPS?

1. Changing a child's school, school attendance, IEP, or participation in a GED program.
2. Changing or adjusting a child's psychotropic or other medication (including initiating or stopping) or altering the administration of medication (e.g., dosage, frequency, etc.)
3. Authorizing any medical consent or medical procedures, including withholding medical treatment.
4. Change in a child's visitation plan with siblings, parents.
5. Altering a child's appearance (e.g., cutting and/or applying chemicals to a child's hair, body piercing, tattoos, etc.)
6. Changing a child's religion and/or allowing a child to engage in religious ceremonies (e.g., Baptism, Confirmation, etc.)
7. Authorization of travel out-of-state.
8. Returning Children to the caregiver from whom they were removed.
9. Discipline of a child in anyway outside of alignment with the standard in Managing the Behavior of Children in Foster Care with Positive and Effective Discipline.

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10. Participation in any high risk activities as outlined in the Foster Care Recreation Standard.

### How do birth parents factor into RPPS?

RPPS and Partnership Parenting are complementary. Partnership Parenting creates shared parenting relationships between birth and foster parents. It provides foster parents with the opportunity to help birth parents learn by setting a positive parenting example for them to follow. In fact RPPS works best within the context of Partnership Parenting—that is foster parents and birth parents working in partnership to make parenting decisions together to the extent possible.

## **Know before you Say NO!**

*The goal of the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards is to ensure that children and youth in foster care have as normal a childhood experience as possible. In order to accomplish this goal, foster caregivers are empowered to make typically parenting decisions without having to obtain administrative approvals from the courts or CFS. So, before you say “no”, KNOW that you can consider saying “yes” if the activity is age and developmentally appropriate and falls within the reasonable and prudent parenting guidelines.*

Before you say “no”, think about the following.....

- Is it age appropriate?
- Is it developmentally appropriate?
- Will it enhance the child’s social, emotional, or developmental well-being?
- Does it fall within your decision making power?
- Had the child been placed long enough for you to make a reasonable and prudent decision about them?
- Do you understand the child’s developmental needs?
- What information has the case worker or agency provided you with? Have they shared any precautions that you need to consider?
- Will the activity expose the child to undue risk or safety issues?
- What would it mean for the child if you said “no” or if you said “yes”?

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- If this were your child, would you approve the request?
- Would the average parenting in your community make the same decision?

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*Frequent Asked Questions and Answers*

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***If the birth/adoptive parent, guardian or prior caretaker disagrees with a decision, is that the ultimate decision as to whether a child can participate in a normative experience?***

Where appropriate, the input and position of the birth/adoptive parent, guardian or prior caretaker should be considered in the decision making process. This input is dependent on the individual situation. After careful consultation, if the caregiver, case manager, and child (if age and developmentally appropriate) determine that an alternative decision is appropriate and in the best interest of the child, then the caregiver and child may move forward with that alternative decision. The determination and the basis for such determination must be documented in the child's case record.

***Is a caregiver allowed to sign permission slips for school activities (e.g., field trip, sports team)?***

The first consideration is to be aware of the policy of the school district as to who may sign the permission slip on behalf of the child. If the school district allows caregivers to sign, a caregiver may sign permission slips allowing a child to participate in school activities. For example, if the child is attending a school trip to a museum, the caregiver may move forward with signing the permission slip without seeking out the permission of the birth/adoptive parent, guardian or prior caretaker. The caregiver must apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard when determining participation in the activity, including but not limited to, assessing the potential risk for injury from the activity, understanding the child's physical and/or cognitive ability, and confirm that participation in such activity does not conflict with any mandatory court appearance, visitation, or violate the child's safety plan. **\*Please note any activity in which a medical release for treatment needs to be signed must be completed by the agency and/or birth parents.**

***Are background checks/clearances necessary in order for a child to attend a party (e.g., birthday, graduation), visit with a friend, or stay overnight at a friend's house?***

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Background checks/clearances are not legally necessary in order for the child to attend a party, visit with a friend, or stay overnight at a friend's house. In all instances, the caregiver must apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard. The caregiver should consider the child's age and maturity to determine if this is developmentally appropriate, as well as the child's history with responsible behavior. Additional factors to consider include who will be in attendance at the party and where the party will be located. The caregiver should have the contact information of the adult supervising the party.

For visiting with a friend, the caregiver should consider whether the caregiver has met the child's friend, knowledge about the friend (e.g., the friend's positive or negative behavior), contact information for the friend (e.g., home address, cell phone number), and the location in which the child will be visiting the friend.

For an overnight stay at a friend's house, the caregiver should meet in-person with the parents or other responsible adults of the family with whom the child will be staying overnight; determining any other individuals who will be in the home during the overnight stay and ascertaining, to the extent possible, that they will not endanger the child's safety; sharing all emergency contact information with the host family; and, knowing where the child will be sleeping.

***Is a child in foster care allowed to access social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram)?***

There is no legal right to access to social media, but it may be allowed on a case by case basis as discussed below.

The caregiver must apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard, including engaging, where appropriate, the birth/adoptive parent, guardian or prior caretaker, and child (if age appropriate), in determining the child's access to social media. The caregiver should consider, whether the activity is developmentally appropriate, the child's history with responsible behavior, the child's safety (e.g., whether the child is a victim of sex trafficking), if there is a court order or order of protection that limits who the child may interact with; monitoring the child's social media activity by limiting his or her use of social media to an open or public space, connecting with the child via the online platform, obtaining the child's user information (username and password) for his/her social media account(s); and teaching the child about safe Internet practices, such as not chatting or meeting with strangers and not sharing personal information online (e.g., Social Security number, address).

***Can a child in foster care have a part-time job?***

Having a part-time job is a normative experience for adolescents. CFS recognizes the importance and value of work experiences for youth in foster care as they offer

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opportunities for beneficial skill development. Caregivers must apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard when considering whether a child is ready for a part-time job. Considerations should include the age and maturity of the child, the child's history of responsible behavior, the type of job, how the child will travel to/from the job, the number of hours and time in which the child shall work, how the job may impact the child's ability to perform academically, and the types of skills the child will develop from a part time job.

**FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LICENSING WORKER AND/OR THE CHILD'S CASE MANAGER.**