

## Foster Care Fact Sheet

Becoming a foster caregiver is a rewarding journey, but it can come with challenges, such as figuring out the rules and regulations. This Fact Sheet answers basic questions faced by many foster caregivers.

### General

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#### 1. I just received a child into my home. How do I get his/her birth certificate and Medicaid card?

Once a child enters foster care, DCFS requests the birth certificate from the Office of Vital Records. The birth certificate is typically received four to six weeks later. Sometimes there are delays, such as with a newborn or when a child was born in another state. The worker must keep the original birth certificate in the case file, but a copy can be given to the foster caregiver.

The large majority of children enter foster care with an active Medicaid case. One of the quickest ways to obtain a child's existing Medicaid number is from the doctor/provider you want the child to see. Medicaid providers are able to access Medicaid Numbers from their billing system. You can find Medicaid providers by specialty and parish at [https://www.lamedicaid.com/apps/provider\\_demographics/provider\\_map.aspx](https://www.lamedicaid.com/apps/provider_demographics/provider_map.aspx)

If a child is not actively receiving Medicaid when they enter care, there may be a delay in receiving the actual Medicaid number. When that happens, discuss with your caseworker the ability for DCFS to pay for needed services or medication, or about reimbursement for needed services.

#### 2. How and when do we receive notices for court hearings, Family Team Meetings, and visits?

No one answer fits every situation. Ideally, DCFS staff and foster caregivers have mutual respect for one another and work in partnership around scheduling matters. With that in mind, there will be occasions when unplanned events come up. Here is information that may be helpful:

- Caseworkers are instructed to notify foster caregivers of Family Team Meetings at least 20 days in advance;
- Caseworkers are instructed to notify foster caregivers at least 20 days prior to each court hearing. Some courts will notify the foster parent of the date and time of the next court hearing at the end of each hearing.

Foster Parents can complete the [Foster Caregiver Progress Report Form](#), provide it to the worker, and the worker submits the form to the court prior to the respective hearing. This form provides an opportunity for the foster caregiver to share information directly with the courts. The PDF and electronic versions of the form are at <https://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/page/foster-parenting>.



### **3. What do I do when a child needs to travel overnight, or out of state?**

DCFS expects all children in foster care to be treated as members of a caring and supportive family regardless of their status in foster care. Children in foster care are allowed to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities and experiences, just as their peers. This includes overnight stays with friends and those approved by the foster parent, and vacation trips.

Visits with the child's birth family should be coordinated with the worker. Before traveling out of state or internationally with a child in foster care, you must get approval to ensure a) the child's team is informed of his or her whereabouts and b) all safety concerns are addressed prior to travel. Approval, and/or notification for overnight travel out of state and out of the country is required from the child's parents, the presiding judge, and DCFS.

When a child requests to stay overnight with persons that have a personal connection to him or her – such as school friends, relatives approved by DCFS or members of the foster caregivers' family – you, as the person providing daily care of the child, may approve the overnight visit. During your monthly visits, inform your caseworker of everyone that you approve the child staying overnight with. The caseworker will also provide you with individuals within the child's family that they can visit with. For more information, see [Policy 6-935: Travel and the Foster Child](#).

### **4. If a child in my home tells me about abuse or neglect that previously occurred, do I report this to DCFS?**

Yes. If a child discloses details about being abused or neglected, it is always best to report this to our Child Protection hotline. While the information is most likely known by DCFS, it may not be, or the child may disclose more details to you than we have on record. Additionally, foster caregivers are considered mandatory reporters. Be sure your assigned caseworker is aware of this information, too.

- To make a report, call 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437), or enter a report online at [https://mr.dcf.la.gov/c/MR\\_PortalApp.app](https://mr.dcf.la.gov/c/MR_PortalApp.app). You should also inform your foster care worker.
- For more information about reporting requirements, see our brochure at [https://www.dcf.la.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Child%20Welfare/DCFS\\_June2019\\_MandatedReporterBrochure.pdf](https://www.dcf.la.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Child%20Welfare/DCFS_June2019_MandatedReporterBrochure.pdf)

## **Supplies and Reimbursements**

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### **5. When a child is placed in a foster home, what are they supposed to come with?**

Several factors can affect this, including a foster caregiver's preferences for choosing clothing and personal items, the time of day the child(ren) is removed from his/her home, and other individual circumstances. Foster parents are encouraged to keep essential toiletries and clothing items available for the age/sex of children they are willing to accept in their home. This is particularly helpful when emergency placements occur in the middle of the night.

While we cover some purchases and reimbursement policies in this document, communication between the foster caregivers and the worker placing the child is essential. When you plan for the child's move to your home, ask the worker questions such as, "What will you be bringing with the child?" or, "Is there anything I need to buy or arrange before you bring him or her?" Also, ask to

arrange a time after placement to go shopping with a DCFS staff member to purchase the remaining items needed.

#### **6. Can DCFS purchase car seats for foster children?**

Yes, check with your caseworker! The local Child Welfare office may have a car seat available. If one is not available through the local office, you can either buy one and request reimbursement or ask DCFS to purchase the car seat. This includes when a child outgrows a car seat initially purchased for them (per Louisiana law). The maximum amount allowed is \$150 for an infant and/or toddler system, and \$50 for a booster seat. Additional details, along with a link to Louisiana law, can be found in DCFS Policy at <https://public.powerdms.com/LADCFS/tree/documents/402986>

#### **7. As a foster parent, what can I be reimbursed for when the expense is NOT directly related to a child placed in my home?**

There are a few reimbursable expenses to assist in becoming a certified foster parent, and/or in maintaining foster parent certification. Some of these include:

- **Babysitting fees**
  - Generally, reimbursement for babysitting is allowed while attending foster parent training. Prospective Foster parents may be reimbursed at a maximum rate of \$10 per hour for one minor child and \$15 per hour for multiple minor children, not to exceed \$200 per fiscal year for pre-service training.
  - Once certified, foster parents may be reimbursed at a maximum rate of \$10 per hour for one minor child and \$15 per hour for multiple minor children, not to exceed \$125 per fiscal year while attending required in-service training.
  - Ask your Home Development worker for more details. You can also review DCFS Policy 9-670 at <https://powerdms.com/link/LADCFS/document/?id=405177>.
- **Swimming pool alarms:** Maximum reimbursement of \$40 when a child is placed in the home.
- **Mileage reimbursement,** based on the current state rate of \$0.67 per mile, for participation in certification training and to meet ongoing training requirements
- **Web-based training:** Reimbursement to certified foster parents for up to \$4 per training topic, for a maximum of \$60 per year. A copy of the training certificate is needed for reimbursement.

#### **8. As a foster parent, what can I be reimbursed for when the expense IS directly related to a child placed in my home?**

There are times when some items or services are paid for directly by the agency, and other times when the foster parent can be reimbursed. All purchases are based on the individual child's needs.

Always talk to your child's foster care worker before making a purchase to ensure the item or service is reimbursable. Below are some of the most frequently requested reimbursable expenses:

- **Clothing**
  - Within the first 30 days a child enters foster care, or when special circumstances arise, clothing is reimbursable up to \$300 (*children under 12*) or up to \$400 (*ages 12 and older*). For children up to age 2, this can include items such as formula, diapers, diaper bags, etc.
  - Replacement clothing can be reimbursed up to \$200 per year (*children under 12*) and up to \$300 (*ages 12 and older*).

- **Other incidental expenses** within the first 30 days a child enters a foster home are reimbursable, up to \$40 for items such as deodorant, shaving cream, toothbrush, sanitary napkins, etc.
- **Luggage** - up to \$100 for a one-time expense or as approved by the foster care worker
- **Mileage**, based on the current state rate of \$0.67 per mile, is reimbursable for the following:
  - Taking a child to and from a family visit
  - Attending DCFS meetings or court hearings on behalf of or with the foster child
  - Transporting the child to and from an appointment (medical, therapeutic)
- **Prescribed medications and vitamins** not covered by Medicaid
- **Hair Care** - Up to \$400 per year for parent approved haircuts, hair styling/products and treatments
- **School Fees** - Act 240, passed by the Louisiana Legislature in 2019, allows foster caregivers to request an economic hardship waiver to exempt children in their care from paying school fees.
- **School Computer** - Foster caregivers are encouraged to pay the technology fee for the child's school computer if it is not waived. Reimbursement is up to \$20 per school year.
- **School Supplies** - up to \$75 per school year
- **School Uniforms** - up to \$150 for a child attending Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and \$250 for youth attending middle and high school
- **Backpack** - \$50 per school year
- The following educational expenses are reimbursable:
  - **Tutoring** – please discuss eligibility and provider requirements with assigned worker
  - **Band instruments** – purchase or rental not to exceed \$400 (including insurance)
  - **Clothing for special events or athletics** (PE uniform, team or athletic gear) – not to exceed \$500 per year
  - **Special school events** – up to \$300 per event (maximum of two events per year) for the purchase or rental of formal gowns, tuxedos, etc.
    - **Prom tickets** – up to \$50 for high school juniors or seniors
  - **Senior expenses** – not to exceed \$200 for senior pictures and \$500 for senior ring and/or senior graduation packages
  - **School pictures/yearbooks** – up to \$50 twice per school year
- **Recreational activities**, including sponsored school trips, scout memberships, self-improvement or skill-based classes – up to \$900 per year (up to \$300 for summer camps and \$600 for socialization activities)

## 9. How do I get reimbursed for expenses?

The current process is to submit a Form 435, along with itemized receipts for purchases. We encourage you to make a copy of all forms and receipts for your records before submitting to your foster care worker.

Itemize and sign the receipts. You can email them to your caseworker and provide the originals during your monthly home visit. If you do not receive reimbursement within 30 days of submission, contact the assigned foster care worker or supervisor. The Form 435 can be found at <https://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/OCS/fosterParenting/435form.pdf>

## 10. What is a Special Board rate?

A regular board rate meets the daily needs of a child that include shelter, food, clothing, allowances, and incidental expenses. A special board rate may be considered when the care and attention needed is beyond what is normally expected for a child of his or her developmental age.

You can request an assessment for a special board rate. A supervisor's approval is required for a special board rate, with additional approvals required in certain circumstances. DCFS Policy 6-1605 provides a guide for staff in assessing special board rates, which can be found at <https://powerdms.com/link/LADCFS/document/?id=402770>.

## Babysitting, Day Care, School and Respite Care

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### 11. Can a family member or friend babysit a child in my care?

Yes. Foster caregivers can have relatives, friends, and other foster caregivers provide assistance, including temporary supervision needs such as babysitting and back-up childcare. Relatives or friends providing unpaid childcare must be approved by DCFS.

The person(s) providing childcare should provide a safe environment, adequate care, and supervision for the child. Additionally, they must follow DCFS' policy regarding discipline, which prohibits the use of physical punishment or any type of punishment that inflicts emotional or other harm.

For children in foster care under 13, babysitters must be at least 15 years old. For children older than 13, babysitters must be at least 21 years old. Children in foster care are not to be left overnight without adult supervision. Babysitting is not generally a reimbursable expense.

For more details, refer to [Policy 6-925: Babysitting and Supervision of Children in Need of Placement or Other Special Circumstance](#).

### 12. When is the use of family and friends for childcare reimbursable?

There are limited times when the use of family, friends, and other foster caregivers for childcare is reimbursable.

- As noted in Question 7, babysitting expenses incurred by foster caregivers for in-service training may be reimbursed by the agency, depending on the availability of funds, at the maximum rate of \$10 per hour for one minor child and \$15 per hour for multiple minor children, not to exceed \$200 per fiscal year for pre-service training. See [Policy 9-670: In-Service Training](#).
- When a child in foster care is hospitalized, the caregiver can be reimbursed for babysitting expenses they may incur for other children in their home, including both biological and foster children, when they are with the foster child in the hospital. The maximum reimbursable amount is \$10 per hour for one minor child and \$15 per hour for multiple minor children. See [Policy 6-1120: Hospital Sitters and Sitters in the Foster Home](#).

### **13. How do I enroll my foster child in day care?**

Day care is available for all children in foster care under the age of 13 through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Type III and Type M daycares that are licensed by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) can be used. Visit <https://louisianaschools.com/> to find a day care near you that accepts CCAP and learn more about the different types of centers available. You can also use one of the [Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) to help you find a daycare facility.

Once a center is located, let your caseworker know, and he/she will complete the forms required for enrollment. Important considerations while locating a childcare provider:

- Not all childcare facilities are willing to accept children receiving state assistance.
- Through LDOE, DCFS pays for childcare services based on the child's enrollment, not actual attendance. Foster parents are not required to pay anything directly to the childcare provider.
- Some providers may not be aware of a recent increase in rates for DCFS clients, which makes them consistent with CCAP rates.

When arrangements have been finalized by DCFS, you can start bringing your child to the day care center.

If a child is less than six weeks old, or there are no current openings at a Type III or M childcare facility and you are on a waiting list, you can request that the child attend a licensed, home-based day care provider. Your caseworker must obtain approval from State Office for this service.

### **14. What services and support are available to help with school registrations and transfers?**

DCFS and LDOE work together to enroll foster children in school as quickly as possible. It is preferable for a child to remain in the school they were attending, providing as much continuity as possible.

A school cannot deny admission to a child in foster care due to missing documentation. The school may require proof that the child is in foster care; you can use the initial placement agreement (98A) or the School 1 Form provided by the caseworker. You can review more in LDOE's, "[Foster Care Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Acts](#)".

### **15. What is Respite Care, and how can I get it?**

Respite is the temporary care of a foster child by another foster caregiver for providing relief and support. All foster parents can receive up to seven days of overnight respite care per child with approval by the foster care worker and supervisor. Additional respite days can be approved at the manager level. Once the respite is authorized and entered into our system, the foster caregivers providing the respite are reimbursed at \$25 per night or \$50 per night for a child with special needs. See [Policy 6-920: Respite and Alternative Child Care Plans](#).

## **More Information**

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We hope this Fact Sheet will be a resource for you in your foster caregiver journey. You can view DCFS' Child Welfare policies at <https://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/page/511>. If you still have questions, don't hesitate to ask your caseworker or email us at [DCFSFostercare@la.gov](mailto:DCFSFostercare@la.gov).