

TOPIC:

Supervision in a Foster Home

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Micro Training Course Developed

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOSTER PARENT TRAINING CREDIT:

**Read through this self-study*

**Fill out the "CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING" Questionnaire*

**Return to ACRF for 1.0 hour of training credit.*



Supervision of foster youth is a complex and important topic. In this **Tiny Training Byte**, we'll cover just a few aspects of providing safe supervision for children and youth. Regulations say "a foster home shall ensure the children in care will receive responsible supervision appropriate to their age and developmental needs." So when it comes to supervision, a foster family needs to consider: a child's history of abuse and neglect; their developmental level; the impact of trauma on their development; and what is in the child's best interest socially and emotionally. Kids and youth should be supervised according to their age and needs. Let's look at a few specific areas that fall under "Supervision."

Babysitters

Babysitters are different from substitute caregivers/respice providers. A babysitter is someone who will be providing care for less than 6 hours. A babysitter must be at least 14 years old and mature enough to handle common emergencies. An example might be: You have a 7-year-old and need to run to the grocery and be gone for about an hour and a half. If you know a trusted 14-year-old who is mature and able to navigate basic supervision AND is able to navigate the foster child's behaviors, then it is okay to have the 14-year-old as your babysitter.

On a related note, foster youth should not babysit other foster youth without both children's caseworkers' involvement and green light. Foster youth can babysit other children as any other teen might, but it's the foster parents duty to ensure that the youth is mature enough and able to make sound decisions if that's the type of work they want to do.

Substitute Caregivers (aka Respice Providers)

Regulations state any caregiver providing supervision of youth 15 years and older needs to be at least 21 years old. If children are younger than 14, a caregiver must be at least 18 years of age.

Additionally, the regulations state you need to notify the child's caseworker and your licensing worker if the child will be in another responsible adult's care for longer than 72 hours. However, good practice says you should let folks know anytime a child will be out of your care for longer than one night. This can be in your house or at the caregiver's residence.

There are some things to consider when identifying a respice provider:

1. *Would this person pass the same background checks you did to provide care as a foster parent?*
2. *Is this person's home safe and free of hazards?*
3. *Can this person meet the specific needs of the child in your care? **For example:** Your 7-year-old needs more supervision than most kids his age, does your respice provider understand this child's needs and is able and willing to provide supervision needed for a child who is more like 4-5 years old?*

Additionally, OCS needs for foster parents to use very sound judgment when leaving a foster youth with another trusted adult. Things to keep in mind:

1. The child’s birth family must always be pre-approved prior to leaving the child with them. This is important for relative caregivers, as your support network may need to be pre-approved by the caseworker to provide care for the child in your care.
2. The saying “as you would with your own kids” may not be an appropriate guideline for caregivers of youth in custody. Many of us have folks in our lives who may have histories that could prevent them from being foster parents. Although you may trust them to watch your own children, these folks may not be okay to use for short term care or babysitters for youth in custody. Talk with your licensing worker and caseworker if you have questions.
3. Regulations state the following of persons having regular contact with a child:
 - a. Responsible, reputable, and uses sound judgment
 - b. Able to deal with frustration and conflict & has the ability to work with children who express themselves negatively
 - c. Cannot themselves have a physical health problem or behavioral health problem that poses a risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a child
 - d. Caregivers must also be able to prevent exposure to physical hazards and with persons and animals known to be a danger

**Regulations
require that
persons having
regular contact
with a child are
responsible,
reputable, and
use sound
judgment.**

Basically this means that no matter who the person is, any caregiver for a child in custody must be able to make good decisions, keep kids safe, and follow regulations/rules, even if they are not licensed foster parents.

Cameras/Audio Monitoring In The Home

Sometimes parents in a foster home may need additional help with supervision. Before making the decision to install cameras, door chimes/alarms, audio or any other type of monitoring device, always consult with your licensing worker and the child’s caseworker. While there is not a regulation preventing a foster home from having monitoring devices in and outside of the home, foster youth are entitled a right to privacy. So these devices cannot be placed in, record, or monitor private areas, like bedrooms and bathrooms, or any other place where privacy is reasonably expected.

When Is It Okay To Leave Kids At Home Alone?

Things to consider when thinking about whether to leave a child home alone (or with other children):

- *What does the child/teen’s team say?*
- *Is the child/teen mature enough to manage their time and make sound decisions without an adult in the home?*
- *What are they going to do while you’re not there?*
- *Are there things in your home you don’t want your children to get into? How will you prevent their curiosity while you’re not home?*
- *Does the child know the safety procedures of the home? Where are the emergency contacts posted? Do they know your address to tell first responders in the event of an emergency?*
- *How long has the youth been in your care?*
- *Is your decision to leave them home alone based on necessity or based on helping the youth navigate independently and build trust?*

Remember, when making these decisions, one size does not fit all. Children and youth should be supervised according to their age and needs.

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