

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards (CW Policy 14.26)

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.

What is RPPS?

The standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain children's health, safety, well-being and best interests while at the same time encouraging their emotional and developmental growth.

Does RPPS apply to group homes?

Yes, group homes must have at least one RPP designee but it is recommended that at least two are designated to ensure that decisions are not delayed due to the RPP's absence. The designated RPP must meet the following requirements:

1. Be in the role of Human Services Professional or higher leadership position.
2. Must be at least 25 years of age or 10 years older than the youth.

How should the RPP 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.

What is not covered by the RPPS?

DFCS, birth parents, and or juvenile court continue to have authority over major decisions that have significant effect on the life of a child in foster care.

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 caregivers and birth parents working in partnership to make parenting decisions together to the extent possible.



Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

KNOW Before You Say NO!

KNOW: *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 DFCS or a CPA. So, before you say “no”, KNOW what 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 (RPPS)?

Has the child been placed long enough for you make reasonable and prudent decisions about them?

Do you understand the child's developmental needs?

What information has DFCS or agency provided you about that child? 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 said “no” or if you said “yes”?

If this were your child, would you approve the request?

Would the average parent in your community make the same decision?

Those are just a few questions to think about; the list is not exhaustive. Foster caregivers have to continually weigh decisions against many factors including each individual child's needs, abilities, maturity, and other factors. Remember, if you need help making the decision, it's okay to still ask DFCS or your CPA.

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
Babysitting & Overnight Guidelines

The “reasonable and prudent parent standard” (RPPS) applies to both babysitting and overnights for children and youth. The foster caregiver may approve babysitting and overnight stays without prior approval from the agency as long as it meets the guidelines below.

The RPPS standard characterized is 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 shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

Babysitter Guidelines

- Make a reasonable and prudent decision regarding the babysitter.

Babysitters must be...:

- At least 18 years old, reliable and competent to provide care needed.
- Prepared and able to meet the needs of children placed in their temporary care.
- Have reviewed the DFCS discipline policy and provided with behavior management instructions.
- Provided information regarding care needs as well as emergency contact information.

Note: Babysitters are classified as either routine or occasional. Routine babysitters must be screened¹ and approved by the agency. **Routine care** means care provided more than once a week, usually at designated times. These individuals must be screened by DFCS case manager. **Occasional care** means care provided once a week or less with no more than three occurrences. Upon completion of the third occurrence, the occasional provider is considered “routine” and is subject to the same screening requirements. Contact the agency to ensure that screenings are conducted before an occasional caregiver becomes routine.

Overnight/Sleepovers Guidelines

- Make a reasonable and prudent decision regarding the overnight/sleep over request.
- May not exceed two nights without permission of the agency.
- Caregiver must be able to meet the needs of children placed in their temporary care.
- Explained the DFCS discipline policy and provided with behavior management instructions.
- Out of state travel regardless of length must be pre-approved by DFCS and the court.
- Provide information regarding care needs as well as emergency contact information.

1 -Screenings must include DFCS CPS records, Sexual Offender’s Registry, Board of Pardons and Parole and Department of Corrections.

Stages of Adolescent Development

Stages of Adolescence	Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Social-Emotional Development
<p style="text-align: center;">Early Adolescence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Approximately 11 – 13 years of age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty: grow body hair, increase perspiration and oil production in hair and skin, Girls – breast and hip development, onset of menstruation Boys – growth in testicles and penis, wet dreams, deepening of voice • Tremendous physical growth: gain height and weight • Greater sexual interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing capacity for abstract thought • Mostly interested in present with limited thought to the future • Intellectual interests expand and become more important • Deeper moral thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle with sense of identity • Feel awkward about one’s self and one’s body; worry about being normal • Realize that parents are not perfect; increased conflict with parents • Increased influence of peer group • Desire for independence • Tendency to return to “childish” behavior, particularly when stressed • Moodiness • Rule- and limit-testing • Greater interest in privacy
<p style="text-align: center;">Middle Adolescence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Approximately 14 – 18 years of age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty is completed • Physical growth slows for girls, continues for boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued growth of capacity for abstract thought • Greater capacity for setting goals • Interest in moral reasoning • Thinking about the meaning of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense self-involvement, changing between high expectations and poor self-concept • Continued adjustment to changing body, worries about being normal • Tendency to distance selves from parents, continued drive for independence • Driven to make friends and greater reliance on them, popularity can be an important issue • Feelings of love and passion
<p style="text-align: center;">Late Adolescence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Approximately 19 – 21 years of age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young women, typically, are fully developed • Young men continue to gain height, weight, muscle mass, and body hair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to think ideas through • Ability to delay gratification • Examination of inner experiences • Increased concern for future • Continued interest in moral reasoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firmer sense of identity • Increased emotional stability • Increased concern for others • Increased independence and self-reliance • Peer relationships remain important • Development of more serious relationships • Social and cultural traditions regain some of their importance

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
Rights of Youth in Foster Care

1. I have the right to fair and equitable treatment by the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), foster parents, and other partners in the care of children in foster care;
2. I have the right to information regarding my heritage and cultural background;
3. I have the right to be safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation;
4. I have the right to know why I am in the child welfare system;
5. I have the right to have my educational needs met;
6. I have the right to have my health needs met;
7. I have the right to family and community connections, including visitation, telephone calls, etc.1;
8. I have the right to have regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities as defined in O.C.G.A. Section 49-5-3;
9. I have the right to have intensive, ongoing efforts made to reunify me with my birth family (i.e. parents or relatives) or to secure a safe, permanent home;
10. I have the right to participate in the development of the case plan and to review sign, and receive a copy of the case plan²;
11. I have the right to choose up to two members of the case planning team who are neither my foster parent nor caseworker³;
12. I have the right to participate in Juvenile court proceedings regarding my family;
13. I have the right to receive the services needed to help me transition to adulthood;
14. I have the right to receive a free copy of my consumer credit report;
15. I have the right to receive an official or certified United States birth certificate, Social Security card, driver's license or identification card, health insurance information, and medical records upon exiting foster care at age 18 or above⁴; and
16. I have the right to receive an age appropriate description of my rights and a personal copy.
17. I have the right to have a personal advocate to support me through the grievance process.

Responsibilities of Youth in Foster Care

1. I have the responsibility to treat myself and others with dignity and respect.
2. I am responsible for my own choices, decisions, actions and behaviors.
3. I have the responsibility to try to learn from my mistakes so I can make positive choices in my life.
4. I have the responsibility to try to the best of my ability in school, to take full advantage of educational opportunities and achieve my educational goals.
5. I have the responsibility to cooperate with services recommended to meet my health needs.
6. I have the responsibility to set and keep safe boundaries with family members, friends, acquaintances, and others with whom I maintain connections.
7. I have the responsibility to do my best to communicate openly with others when I have a problem.
8. I have the responsibility to ask for help when I need it, even when I have trouble asking for help.
9. I am responsible for making amends if my actions harm others.
10. I am responsible for making every effort not to cause harm to myself or others and to speak up when I feel my rights have been violated.

1 Unless the court determines unsupervised visitation is not in the child's best interest (O.C.G.A 15-11-112)

2 One member of the case planning team may be designated to be the youth's advisor/advocate, with respect to the application of the reasonable and prudent parent standard to the youth.

3 DFCS may reject an individual selected by a youth if it has good cause to believe that individual would not act in the youth's best interest.

4 This right applies only to youth who have been in foster care for at least six months prior to their exit.

**Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
Youth Rights Grievance Form**

Youth Name:
Youth Email:
Youth Placement:

County: Region:
Youth Contact Number:
DFCS Case Manager:

STEP ONE Grievance

STEP TWO Grievance

What right do you feel has been violated? Please explain what happened.

What have you done to resolve this situation/concern prior to filing a STEP ONE of Youth Rights Grievance ?

How would you like this situation/concern to be resolved?

Please provide contact information for any person who was involved including youth advocate.

Name	Phone Number	Relationship (to youth)
------	--------------	-------------------------

Date Submitted:

**Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
RPPS and YRs Practice Change Action Plan**

What's one personal paradigm (thinking/acting) shift that you need to make in order to support RPPS?			
What's one personal paradigm (thinking/acting) shift that you need to make in order to support YRs?			
Write your personal practice change plan.			
List the people/groups that you need to share the RPPS and YRs information with?	When will you share the information?	What issue might they have/encounter?	How will you address the issue?

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards Frequently Ask Questions (FAQs) Revised 9/6/2015

The FAQs will be continually updated as needed and available at www.gascore.com. The "revised by dates" will be changed as the document is updated to indicate that additional FAQs have been added. To add a question, please email Cedeline.Samson@dhs.ga.gov.

1. Why are we doing this?

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act includes more than prevention. It also requires states to provide youth in foster care a **list of their rights**, as well as opportunities to **participate in their case plan**. Furthermore, this bill addresses long term foster care by exploring more options for older youth in care instead of resorting to **permanent foster care**. This bill additionally focuses on opportunities to provide more **normalcy** for youth in care by reducing the amount of red tape a young person faces when seeking to participate in school or community activities.

2. Shouldn't we have been doing this all along?

Many foster families are currently supporting youth in the most "normal" ways possible. A lot of foster kids have great opportunities to try new things and be a part of community groups and clubs. However, there are limitations on the amount of time youth can be unsupervised or be in homes of their friends. The best example is youth not being able to go to sleepovers because of the background checks that need to be done. This new policy leaves the decisions about things like that to care givers.

3. What about liability?

Caregivers are immune from civil liability when approving children and youth to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities when the caregiver is acting in accord with the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards.

4. Providers are often cited regarding lack of supervision. Will RCC and OPM be the judge of what is reasonable and prudent?

Both RCC and OPM staff are knowledgeable about the RPPS. All DFCS permanency and CPS are being trained in RPPS. Additionally, RPPS has been added to the DFCS Child Welfare Policy Manual and has been added to the FY2016 RBWO Minimum Standards (for private agencies). The Prudent Parenting Project Team/Workgroup will continue to review additional policies such as Corrective Action Plans and Policy Violations to determine if policies will need to be amended. Remember, each agency is required to complete a through initial assessment and continuous annual assessment of the foster parent. During these assessments, providers should be assessing the foster parent's caregiver's capacity. Providers are also required to provide training to the foster parent/caregiver to increase their caregiver capacity annually.

5. We got a lot of specific questions all along the line of, what if a parent and a youth agree on something but their agency and or DFCS and/or their birth parent doesn't agree. How does that get resolved?

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards Frequently Ask Questions (FAQs) Revised 9/6/2015

The foster parent/caregiver will be the primary day-to-day basis decision maker. However, the birth parent should be involved as much as practical in decision-making. Circumstances that can't be resolved with a parenting team (caregiver, birth parent, staff, youth) should be elevated to the next line of supervision within DFCS until a satisfactory resolution can be reached.

6. Who pays for "normal" activities?

No new specials funds have been made available. However, there are several ways to fund the children's normal activities.

- *Ask about any available county funds.*
- *For children under age 14 years, utilize Summer Safety/Enrichment Funds (UAS 521, code 80)*
- *Afterschool Programs*
- *Youth who are over 14 years old and has been in custody of DFCS for over 6 months, and are ILP eligible, could seek funding through ILP. However, the information regarding the activity should be included in the child's Written Transitional Living Plan.*
- *Children who are in foster care typically have Amerigroup Medicaid. Amerigroup currently covers cost for after-school Boys and Girls Club and Girl Scouts. Foster parents would need to contact Amerigroup to access these services.*
- *Foster parents/caregivers are encouraged to seek no or low cost community based activities as well.*

7. What role will the Graduated Independence Plan (GIP) policy play in all of this?

DFCS will be making changes to several policies that would affect a foster parents/caregivers ability to exercise prudent parenting. As of now, DFCS would encourage the use of the graduated independence plan as a tool to communicate with the youth regarding the agency's expectation of him/her as the provider continues to grant the child's means to gain independence. A written GIP however will no longer be required though its use is still recommended..

8. How are we going to ensure that ALL youth have access to these opportunities?

The law requires that DFCS ensure that youth have access to age and developmentally appropriate activities. During ECEM contacts, DFCS and RBWO providers should include this in their assessments. Staff should ask children questions regarding their activities. For private providers, OPM will continue to assess this during their monitoring visits for comprehensive and safety reviews.

9. Children and youth in foster care **MAY NOT** ride with other teens, their coaches, etc., right?

They may ride with other people including other teens with the permission of their caregivers.

**Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards
Frequently Ask Questions (FAQs)
Revised 9/6/2015**

10. Children and youth in foster care **MAY NOT** participate community activities unless background screenings have occurred, right?

Background screenings are not a requirement for participation in community activities. The youth may participate with the permission of their caregiver(s).

11. Children and youth in foster care **MAY NOT** travel with their foster parents out of county or out of state right?

The children and youth in foster care may travel out of county and/or state, however, this will require advance approval from DFCS and the Juvenile Court (for out of country travel).

12. Who can be considered a substitute caregiver?

Please see the Babysitter Sitting handout for the key requirements.

13. Who can serve as a caregiver for Child Care Institutions (CCIs)?

Caregivers at CCIs or group homes must be in the role of Human Services Professional or higher, at least 25 years of age or 10 years older than the youth for whom the decision is being made.

14. Can children 14 years of age and older be left under their own supervision for short periods of time with other children present, i.e. friends, foster parent's younger children and/or other foster children 14 years and older?

*Children 14 years of age and older may be left under their **own supervision** for short periods of time. Foster parents/Caregivers should use the good judgment and assess the children's acuity mix when deciding to leave children unattended for a short periods of time.*

15. What are non-negotiables?

Non-negotiables are situations where the caregiver cannot make sole decisions for foster children. These decisions must be made by the biological or removal family and/or DFCS. The following are a list of non-negotiables:

- *Court Order Visitation/General*
- *Medical Approvals-other*
- *Return children without court approval*
- *Disciplinary Policy*
- *Changing Schools*
- *ILP*
- *Drastic changes of child's appearance*
- *Medications*

Caregiver Guideline for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting (RPPS)

*The RPPS standard characterized is 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 shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.*

Activity Category	GREEN-RPPS APPLIES—Caregiver may make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision without consulting in advance with the agency.	RED—RPPS DOES NOT APPLY. Caregiver must contact the agency for approval / consultation.
Family Recreation	Movies, Community Events, Hiking, Camping, Swimming	Any overnight event that will exceed to two nights.
Social/Extracurricular	Camps, field trips, school related activities, church activities, youth organizations, sports, social activities with peers.	Any overnight event that will exceed to two nights.
Overnights	Ok for up to two nights	Any overnight event that will exceed to two nights.
Leaving Youth Unsupervised	May approve youth age 14 years and older to be unsupervised for reasonable amounts of time. Unsupervised time should be decided based on age, current behavior, history, and ability.	Youth under age 14 years of age may not be left unsupervised.
Motorized Activities	Must follow the DFCS policy on motor vehicle and bicycle safety.	DFCS and CPAs shall ensure all approved caregivers comply with the following safety guidelines regarding motor vehicles: a) Caregivers are required to transport every child under eight years of age in a federally approved child safety seat that is

Activity Category	GREEN-RPPS APPLIES—Caregiver may make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision without consulting in advance with the agency.	RED—RPPS DOES NOT APPLY. Caregiver must contact the agency for approval / consultation.
		<p>used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Caregivers are required to transport children 12 years and under in the rear seat of the vehicle, with seat belts buckled up to protect young children from air bag injuries. c) Caregivers are prohibited from allowing children and youth under the age of 18 to ride in the bed of a pickup truck. The County Director/Designee may provide waivers when children wish to participate in parades, hayrides, and similar events. d) Prior to allowing a child to operate a motor vehicle, caregivers must contact the child's SSCM and comply with all agency policy regarding the driving of motor vehicles by youth in placement. e) All children in care, regardless of age, must be individually secured (one child to a seat belt) by an appropriately fitting seat belt when being transported in a motorized vehicle. f) Caregivers must never leave children under the age of 12 years or children who are medically, emotionally, psychologically, or behaviorally challenged unattended in motor vehicles. g) Caregivers must provide a properly fitted and securely fastened safety helmet for any child who is operating a bicycle or riding as a passenger on a bicycle on a road, bicycle path, or sidewalk.

Activity Category	GREEN-RPPS APPLIES—Caregiver may make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision without consulting in advance with the agency.	RED—RPPS DOES NOT APPLY. Caregiver must contact the agency for approval / consultation.
		h) Helmets are required for children when operating or riding as a passenger on other types of vehicles (excluding an automobile), such as all-terrain vehicles, motorbikes, small motor craft, etc.
BB Guns , Hunting Rifles	<p>Provide reasonable and prudent supervision of children playing with toys that have the potential to cause in personal injury or injury to others (e.g., BB guns, air guns, sling shots, bows and arrows, etc.). Such toys come with warnings and age restrictions that need to be followed to ensure proper safety precautions are taken.</p> <p>Caregivers may make reasonable and prudent decisions regarding youth’s participation in thrill ride activities such as bungee jumping or roller coasters.</p>	<p>Under limited circumstances, particular children may be allowed to handle firearms. Youth ages 13 years and older who have successfully complied with all applicable hunting license requirements for Georgia, may engage in hunting activities while under the direct supervision of the caregiver or other approved adult. The caregiver/ approved adult is also required to be in compliance with Georgia hunting license requirements. Georgia requires completion of a hunter education course (including safety guidelines) for all persons born after January 1, 1961. The County Director/Designee must give prior approval, taking under consideration the psychological and emotional capacity of the child as well as any developmental or behavioral needs. If parental rights have not been terminated, prior written approval must be obtained from the birth parent.</p>
Driving	May authorize youth to take drivers education or teach youth to drive. See ILP Policy Chapter 13.8	Once licensed, the youth may not operate a vehicle for which they are not covered under the insurance policy.

Activity Category	GREEN-RPPS APPLIES—Caregiver may make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision without consulting in advance with the agency.	RED—RPPS DOES NOT APPLY. Caregiver must contact the agency for approval / consultation.
Youth Employment	May authorize the youth to work based on Georgia’s youth employment law http://www.dol.state.ga.us/pdf/rules/child_labor_laws_and_rules.pdf	
Religious Participation	May attend church services if not in conflict with child or parent’s beliefs.	Participation in religious ceremonies such as baptism or confirmations require the approval of the birth parent.
All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV)	Extra caution must be exercised when allowing a child less than 18 years of age to operate or ride as a passenger on a motorcycle, a motorbike, an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), a high- speed water craft, or other similarly motorized vehicles. These high-speed vehicles can be particularly challenging to operate; therefore, reasonable care and caution should be applied when considering a child’s participation in such activities.	
Animal Safety	Children are the primary victims of dog bites. Dogs with which the child is familiar usually inflict such bites. In the absence of substantive dog safety laws in Georgia, caregivers must take reasonable safety precautions when children are around pets. Serious consideration should be given to the type/breed of pets and their history of violence or aggressiveness toward people when assessing safety factors in the foster home.	The agency must discuss any issues or concerns related to any pet (type, size, quantity, etc.) should be thoroughly discussed and documented during the assessment and re-evaluation process.
Personal Firearms	Caregivers must never allow children in care to handle any type firearm (see BB Gun/Hunting rifle exception above).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All firearms in the home must be kept under lock and key and inaccessible to children at all times. As an added safety measure, any commercially available, reliable gun- safety mechanisms (e.g., trigger guard lock.) may also be used. (See Foster Parent Manual for a list of the types of gun safety devices that may be used.) 2. All ammunition should be locked away and stored in a separate location from firearms in the home.

Activity Category	GREEN-RPPS APPLIES—Caregiver may make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision without consulting in advance with the agency.	RED—RPPS DOES NOT APPLY. Caregiver must contact the agency for approval / consultation.
		3. Keys to locked storage devices are to be kept in the possession of an adult or reasonably secured from children.
Medication	<p>May not make changes to prescribed regiments/doctors' orders.</p> <p>Caregivers may administer over the counter (OTC) medications as appropriate, in consideration of any know allergies and possible interactions with other medications and ensuring that OTC drugs are used as directed.</p>	1. All medication prescribed to children in foster care shall be administered only as directed by the prescribing physician, administered only by authorized adults, and stored and transported in the original containers.