

NORMALCY POLICY

WASHOE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



BACKGROUND:

- Florida Visit
- Committee work

(Licensing workers/supervisors, CPS workers/supervisors, foster parent attorneys, birthparent and youth.

- Management review process
- Implementation in Washoe County (9/2014)
- Statewide work



PURPOSE:

- To allow children to experience “normalcy” while placed in licensed foster care homes
- Activities under the policy are viewed as a benefit to the child specifically, however they may also benefit the foster parent.

REASONABLE AND PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD (RPPS):

Washoe County provides guidance, direction, and establishes parameters by adopting the [“Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard”](#) (referred to as “RPPS”) defined as a “standard used by a caregiver or licensee that is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions with the goal of maintaining the foster child’s health, safety, and best interest”.

We encourage foster parents to talk to their workers and have found that some decisions are made as a team, especially when the foster parent is unsure and needs support.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF LICENSED FOSTER PARENT IN ADHERING TO RPPS:

Foster parent will use RPPS in applying decision making when parenting foster children.

The caregiver or licensee will:

- Have adequate information about the activity a foster child is participating in
- Take reasonable steps to determine the appropriateness of an activity
- Take into account any foreseeable risks of the activity or event
- Ask themselves questions such as, “Does this activity seem reasonable? Age Appropriate? Are there foreseeable hazards or risks? Is there anything in child’s history suggesting it would not be appropriate? Does it assist in normalizing life in foster care?”



HOW WE IMPLEMENTED IT...

This is a process and it takes time...we are still implementing normalcy in Washoe County 15 months later.

We started with management sending clear messages of support via email and in Division Meetings.

The policy was distributed to foster parents and workers at the same time in writing.

Presentations and discussions were made in smaller groups (individual unit meeting, foster parent support groups, one-on-one supervisor/worker).

We encouraged discussion about the “what if’s.”

We had normalcy champions (workers and supervisors with success stories) who talked one-on-one with workers/supervisors and attended presentation.

We have done presentations with a worker and foster parent to talk about the impact to the child and what it’s like....”real life examples”.



SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES ADDRESSED UNDER THE NORMALCY POLICY:

Overnights with peers

Overnights with family/friends of the foster parent

Peer relationships and “normal” age appropriate activities

Teen in foster care driving or passenger with other teen driver

Child in foster care babysitting

Participation in sports or other school sanctioned activities



EXCEPTIONS AND CLARIFICATION:

There are some exceptions to applying the Normalcy Policy that people on the committee felt needed to be clear, such as:

- Tattoos, body piercings, permanent cosmetic application
- Changes to the hair that are non-usual or a child's first haircut
- Any visitations between foster child and parents/relatives must still be approved by the worker



SOME CHALLENGES:

Relatives: In the beginning it became clear that some of our policy needed to be slightly different for relatives to make sure there was clarity for everyone involved.

Specialized Foster Care: The policy has been developed to address normalcy for children residing in SFC, and there are some variations.

We felt strongly that ALL children and youth needed to have normalcy. These two areas took more time and created more areas of discussion for us.



WHERE CAN THE NORMALCY POLICY BE FOUND?

Policy's that have been developed out of QPI committees in Washoe County can be found at www.qpinevada.org under Washoe County QPI Committees

