



**Anoka County**

HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

Community Social Services and Behavioral Health

# Anoka County Child Foster Care Handbook

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## Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All foster parents are Mandated Reporters and are **legally required** to report suspicions of abuse and neglect of *any* child. If a child appears to be in immediate danger, call 911.

All child maltreatment reports (even if the child has a current child protection case manager) need to go through a screening process. To make a report in Anoka County please call 763-324-1440, screeners are available 24/7 to take reports. Reports in Anoka County can also be made online using this form found on our website: [Anoka County Child Protection](#)

We recommend all foster parents review these Mandated Reporter Trainings annually for more information: [Mandated Reporter Training](#).

## Accidents/Injuries/Incidents/Emergencies

Most small injuries such as a bruise or a scraped knee do not need to be reported, however keeping your own documentation of incidents is advised.

Injuries requiring medical attention should be reported to your child's case manager as well as your foster care worker **within 24 hours**. Evening and weekend reports should still be made by leaving a voicemail. These incidents should be reported verbally and in writing using an [Incident Report Form](#).

Foster Parents are **legally required to report all client deaths and serious injuries** to the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (651) 757-1800. Some examples of "serious injuries" are fractures, dislocation, burns, near drowning, heat exhaustion, suicide attempt and self-injury. Please consult with your foster care worker to determine if an injury is "serious." More information can be found here: [Reporting a Death or Serious Injury](#)

If a child has a medical emergency, runs away, or goes missing:

- Call 911
- Call the child's case manager.
- If case manager is not immediately available ask to talk to their supervisor or the on-call worker.
- **If after hours please call Police Dispatch at 763-427-1212**, let them know you are a foster parent.
- If you need a consent for medical treatment, please let the responding party know.

## Activities

School Events: The majority of school expenses are covered by the monthly foster care rate. All children in foster care qualify for free lunches and may qualify for free or reduced activity fees at school. Please check with the school for more information.

Check with the child's social worker and your foster care social worker for potential resources related to:

- Driver's training (see also "Driver's Education/Licenses")
- Music and dance lessons
- Musical instruments
- Graduation activities
- School pictures
- Bikes
- Camps
- Technology
- Other

Please keep in mind some activities may require parental consent, consult with your child's social worker.

## Agreement Between Foster Parents and Licensing Agency

When children are placed in foster care, their parents, the responsible agency, licensing agency and foster parents, all must work together to ensure the foster child's well-being. This Agreement between Foster [Parents and Child Foster Care Licensing Agency](#) outlines these expectations.

## Allegations

It's not uncommon for there to be a complaint or an allegation against a foster home. These complaints will be addressed by Anoka County Social Services.

If an individual (including children or their family members) requests to make a formal complaint about a foster home, the foster parent must provide that person with a copy of their [Complaint and Grievance Procedure](#).

- All licensed foster homes are bound by the State of Minnesota child foster care licensing rules and statutes. All complaints against foster families will be investigated.
- Complaints may contain child protection issues (maltreatment), licensing issues or both.
- The child's social worker may choose to remove the foster children from your home while a complaint is being investigated.
- A child protection intake screener will determine whether the complaint meets the criteria to be investigated by the child protection program pursuant to the *Maltreatment of Minors Act, MN Statute 626.556, Subd. 11*.
- If the complaint does not meet the criteria above, your licensing social worker will investigate the complaint to determine if there are any licensing violations. Violations could result in a correction order or other licensing actions.

### To avoid allegations of abuse or neglect:

Document (use incident report) and immediately notify the placing social worker and/or licensing social worker of any injuries to children in your care. Report runaway or missing children immediately.

#### **Supervise the children**

Provide a higher level of supervision for foster children than you do for most children and teens. Most children in foster care have experienced some form of trauma. They may play more aggressively or engage in behaviors that are not typical for other children. Ask the placing social worker if you have any questions about supervision needs.

#### **Know and respect your own limitations:**

Know the number of children and the needs of children that you feel comfortable managing. Talk to your licensing social worker if you are feeling overwhelmed.

#### **Maintain your home within licensing standards:**

The home safety checklist completed during initial licensing and licensing reviews contains standards that must always be in place.

## **Prevent and correct potential hazards in the home/yard**

## **Never engage in corporal punishment (see discipline policy)**

### **Role model and teach boundaries:**

Foster children may have experiences that cause them to misinterpret any kind of touch.

- Avoid even innocent touching that a sexually abused child may interpret as being sexual (such as having a foster child rub your back).
- Require appropriate clothing when in shared areas of the home
- One at a time in the bathroom
- Bathroom door closed when bathing/toileting
- Bedroom door closed when changing
- Let children wash their private areas as soon as they can do so independently.
- Do not require children to hug or touch anyone
- Show normal affection among your own family members
- Discuss and model personal space

## **Babysitters & Substitute Care Providers (see also: Financial-Child Care)**

### **Babysitters**

A babysitter must be able to meet the needs of and maintain a safe environment for each child. A babysitter is expected to be in the home less than 24 hours. **Anoka County requires babysitters to be 18 years or older.** Children who are in foster care cannot be used as babysitters for other children in foster care, regardless of age or relationship (i.e., siblings).

Please review Anoka County Foster Care's [Babysitting Guidelines](#).

### **Short and Long-Term Substitute Care Providers**

The State of Minnesota defines Short Term Substitute Care as “less than 72 hours of continuous care for a foster child” and Long-Term Substitute Care as “more than 72 hours of continuous care for a foster child.”

Please see this [Definitions & Requirements](#) document before choosing substitute caregivers for the children placed in your home as there may be additional training and background check requirements for these caregivers.

## Beds/Bedrooms

All foster children must sleep in a bedroom with two approved exits. Foster children can share a bedroom with individuals under the age of 18 years old. Typically, foster children 5+ plus years should not share a room with an individual of the opposite sex.

Please contact your Foster Care worker with all questions and concerns.

Sleeping arrangement for infants require special considerations. Please review Safe Sleep Standards.

### **Infants to 1 year old**

- An infant should sleep in a crib (i.e. car seats and bassinets are not considered safe sleep)
- One child per crib
- A Pack & Play/portable crib may be used for no longer than 6 months.
- **No pillows, blankets or stuffed animals are allowed in an infant sleeping space.**

## Cars (see also: [Transportation](#))

## Clothing (see also: [Financial](#))

## Comfort Calls

- Shortly after a child is placed in foster care, social workers are required to attempt to coordinate a phone call between foster parents and the child's parents/guardians to establish a connection and encourage ongoing information-sharing. This may help minimize stress and confusion for everyone and may help build connections between parents and foster care providers, supporting the child's transition into foster care.
- This call is between only the adults; direct contact between parents and children requires prior approval from the child's social worker.
- There may be circumstances when the social worker determines that such calls are not in the child's best interest or the child's parents/legal guardians are not able to be located. The social worker will communicate this to the foster parents.

- More information on Comfort Calls see: [A Guide to Comfort Calls by QPI](#) and [Initial foster care phone calls by DHS](#)

## Confidentiality/Privacy (see also: Technology, Internet Safety, Social Media)

Foster Parents have access to non-public information about a foster child and their family. Keeping this information private is an important part of your role as foster parent. “Need to know” is a good rule of thumb to guide information sharing. Foster parents should share only the specific information needed to care for the child. Persons such as babysitters, doctors, social service professionals and education professionals at times need information to best serve that child. Friends, other foster parents, family, and neighbors typically don’t need to know any information about the foster child and their family. Please refer to page 3 in the [Foster Parent Agreement](#) for more guidance on information sharing.

**Foster children should not be shown or mentioned online in any form. Foster parents (including relative providers) may not share photos of or information about foster on social media.**

Photos of the back of a child or photos with their face covered are not allowed. Photos of children should also not be included in mailings such as Christmas Cards.

Often you will be asked to send pictures and information to children’s parents. If approved by the child’s social worker this is encouraged.

Information shared in support groups and staff meetings is confidential and should always stay within that group.

When children are of an appropriate age and have permission from their social worker to have their own social media accounts, the child may choose to share their own information.

## Communication

As a Foster Parent you will be in communication with many different people involved in the life of the children in your home. Please see the following tips about communication with others while maintaining the privacy of the children in your home.

### E-Mail and Text Tips for Foster Parents:

- **Do not use e-mail or text to discuss confidential information.** Unless going through the county’s secure email system. If a member of your child’s team requests that you email confidential information, request that they send you a secure email that you can reply to. **See instructions below for using Anoka County’s secure email system.**

- Use initials rather than full names
- Remember that e-mail and text leave a permanent record. Unlike a conversation in person or over the telephone, a message is recorded verbatim. Don't include anything in the message that you would not want to be shared with everyone in a courtroom at some later time. Test what you have written by asking yourself this: Will I regret sending this message if, at some later time, I read it in the newspaper or see it posted on a website?
- Re-read the message before you send it. If you are angry or frustrated when writing the message, sleep on it, and review it the next day when you are in a better state of mind.
- Think about picking up the phone instead. Instead of communicating via e-mail or text, consider having a conversation with the intended recipient.
- Discuss only one topic per message. If you need to communicate about more than one topic, send more than one message. For example, if a foster parent needs to communicate with a social worker about foster children from more than one family, the foster parent should send a separate message for each one.
- Send a new message with a new subject tag to begin a new exchange of information. For example, imagine that you have been exchanging e-mail messages with someone about scheduling a meeting to discuss a foster child's adjustment while in your home. The subject line on this string of e-mail messages contains words "Progress Meeting." Now you need to communicate with the same person about something unrelated to the progress meeting. Resist the temptation to simply hit "Reply" as a shortcut to entering the e-mail address. If you are initiating a new topic, start a new message.

## Opening Secure Emails from Anoka County

Anoka County protects you and your data by sending encrypted (secure) emails.

[Link to detailed instructions](#)

Follow the steps below:

First Time Receiving a Secure Email?

- Register – Click Open Message
- Create and enter a password and retype your password in the secure web portal

Opening a Secure Email?

- When you receive a secure email from the county: Open message
- Enter your password and click "sign-in" at the secure portal

## Court

### Remote Court Appearance Requests

All juvenile protection hearings will be heard in-person effective Monday, October 31, 2022. We understand that in-person hearings are not suitable for all parties, so a process has been created if a remote option is needed for a particular hearing.

Foster Parents are encouraged to use a [Remote App Request Form](#) if they would like to attend a hearing but are unable to do so in person. Court Administration has the authority to approve all remote requests for Foster Parents, Children, and ICWA Monitors, but all other requests will be routed to the appropriate judge for review.

Remote App Requests must be completed and submitted to the [10thAnokaJuvenileUsers](#) e-mail at least **4 business days prior** to the scheduled hearing.

## Culture

As stated in the [Agreement Between Foster Parent and Child Foster Care Licensing Agency](#), foster parents are to “Make every effort to increase understanding of, and respect for, the religious, racial and cultural heritage, and sexual orientation and gender identity of a child and their family.” Foster parents should honor and respect the culture a foster child comes from by integrating that culture into their own home as appropriate.

Examples of supporting a child’s culture would be providing appropriate diet, access to cultural experiences/support, supporting visits with extended family.

Please let your Foster Care Social Worker know if you would like resources for trainings related to culture.

## Damage claims (see also: Financial)

## Daycare (see also: Short Term Care)

## Dental (see also: Medical)

## Discipline

Child foster care license holders must have and follow a [Discipline Policy](#). In developing this policy, license holders must consider the child/youth’s abuse history and needs relating to their

developmental, cultural, disability, and individual needs. License holders should discuss the discipline policy with all caregivers. **Corporal (physical) punishment of a child in foster care is never acceptable.**

Please consult with each child's care team to determine the most appropriate discipline for that child.

[Email](#) (see also: Communication)

[Emergencies](#) (see also: Accidents)

[Financial](#)

***This section is intended only to provide guidance and direction to providers regarding financial procedures for Foster Care Providers. For more detail or further information, please contact the Placement Support Unit (PSU) at 763-324-1240.***

[Foster Care Rates](#)

The monthly reimbursement payments paid to foster parents are to assist with the expenses of caring for the child in your home. These funds are to offset costs such as transportation, food, clothing, incidentals, personal needs, extra household and maintenance costs, as well as some extra-curricular activities for the child. If you have questions about other costs that you may need help with, please talk directly to your child's case manager.

To receive monthly reimbursement payments, foster parents must complete a [claim form](#) for each child in their home every month. After two months of submitting paper forms foster parents will be able to set up an online account. Please review the [claim form instructions](#) for more information, before completing the form.

### **Basic Maintenance Rates**

The basic maintenance payment rates to be paid to child foster care parents, adoptive parents, relative custodians or to youth 18 years old up to age 21 in extended foster care who are eligible for Northstar Care for Children benefits, including those placed in unlicensed supervised independent living settings, **effective July 1, 2023** can be found here:

[https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatesReleased&Rendition=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=mndhs-062488](https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatesReleased&Rendition=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=mndhs-062488)

### **Emergency Home Rate**

Contracted Emergency Homes receive an additional subsidy per month. Please talk with your Foster Care Social Worker with any questions.

## Substitute Care and Foster Home Supplement Pay (Vacations)

Foster Home Supplement pay (also referred to as non-employee “vacation pay”) is an incentive provided to Anoka County Foster Care providers who may want some time to rest and refresh. The intended benefit is to provide a short break for qualified Foster Care Providers to provide time for self-care activities.

A qualified foster provider who provides at least 365 days of care per year may be eligible to have up to 14 days Foster Home Supplement Pay the following year. An eligible foster provider who provides at least 183 days of care per year may be eligible for up to 7 days of Foster Home Supplement Pay the following year. Determinations are based on the previous year totals. Days earned are calculated in the following manner:

Billy B.	43 days	Janet L.	250 days
Suzy Q.	39 days	Bobby M.	43 days
<u>Hanna J.</u>	<u>89 days</u>	<u>Donna H.</u>	<u>363 days</u>
<b>Total</b>	271 days of care	<b>Total</b>	596 days of care
	= 7 days of Foster Home Supplement Pay		= 14 days of Foster Home Supplement Pay

In January each year, qualifying Foster Providers will receive a letter from the Placement Support Unit indicating the number of days and daily rate they are eligible to use in the coming year.

### Eligibility and Guidelines:

- Foster Home Supplement pay is **not** available for relative only placements or providers licensed by another county.
- If a provider has a non-relative permanency placement, that provider has the option to claim “vacation pay” AND keep the permanency placement with them.
- Foster Home Supplement pay is only available when the foster child(ren) (or providers) are out of the home and providers have a substitute provider caring for the foster child(ren).
- The provider must be currently licensed and available for placements.
- Foster Home Supplement days cannot be carried over or accumulated for future years.
- Payment of cash in lieu of using eligible Foster Home Supplement pay is not allowed.

### Payment Procedure:

- The foster provider contacts the placing worker(s) to request approval of the vacation plan (location of where the child will be and/or the contact information of the substitute provider) at least 2 weeks in advance. The vacation plan is not legally authorized until this step is

complete. If you need assistance finding a substitute provider, please contact your licensing worker.

- The primary foster provider submits a [Foster Home Supplement/Vacation Incentive Claim Form](#) to Placement Support Unit(PSU) indicating the name of their home and dates of vacation approved.
- The substitute care giver submits a Foster Home Claim Form to the Placement Support Unit indicating the name of the child and dates of substitute care. The substitute provider will be issued the child's per diem rate directly from the Placement Support Unit.

**For more detail regarding Foster Home Supplement, please contact the Placement Support Unit at 763-324-1240.**

### Vacation Incentive:

Foster Parents who take foster children with them on vacation instead of using substitute care receive the child's daily foster care rate plus an additional \$20 per day, per child during their vacation. Providers need to contact the case manager/social worker in advance for approval of vacation plans and regarding their intent to use incentive pay. Incentive days are limited to no more than 14 days each per year, per child. Providers will need to fill out and submit the [Supplement/Vacation Incentive Claim Form](#) for that time period.

### Absence of Placement:

- **Basic rate** payment, not the MAPCY rate, is paid for temporary absences of the placement from the foster home is limited to five days.
- **Basic rate** payment, not the MAPCY rate, is paid for up to 14 days of temporary absence is allowed if the child is hospitalized or visiting relatives. Planned absences for other reasons do not qualify for per diem payments unless specifically authorized by the case manager.

### Child Care (see also: Babysitters and Substitute Care Providers)

**Full-time day care is typically not recommended for children who are in foster care.** If you feel you need daycare for a foster child, please consult with the child's case manager. Day care costs are not funded by Anoka County; however, some assistance may be available. Check with your child's case manager for resources.

**Prior** to providing services:

- Childcare providers must complete the forms for criminal background investigations if they are not currently licensed childcare providers.
- Childcare providers must receive required information about emergency contacts and other information specific to children in foster care, keeping in mind confidentiality and "need to know" information in order to care for the child.

- Unless there is a special arrangement approved by the case manager, funding for substitute care of this nature is the responsibility of the Foster Provider and then must be approved by the child's case manager.

## Short Term Care

"Respite care" is a term that has been commonly used to describe short term care by another provider. However, the county definitions can vary – see below.

### Planned Relief (county paid):

Planned Relief is used to maintain the foster placement of children with special/difficult behaviors. A plan of recurring Planned Relief needs to be identified in the Out-of-Home Placement Plan (OHPP). A supervisor needs to approve the Planned Relief. The County pays the per diem rate established by the child's current **MAPCY** assessment to the substitute care provider **and** continues to pay the foster home.

### Respite Care (county paid):

Some families qualify for respite care when children are not foster care and living with their own family. These requests may come from Child Protection or Children's Mental Health. Payment rates can vary and will be discussed at time of referral.

### Provider Relief (provider paid):

The foster parent in need of childcare is responsible for notifying the foster child's case manager and foster care social worker of the need prior to it occurring. The child's case manager will put in a request for dates needed in order to find a provider. The **ongoing provider is responsible to pay the substitute care provider and clarify the specific payment arrangements.** Payment is the daily rate, per child, of the children in care **or** as agreed upon by both providers.

## MAPCY Rates and Determination

The [MAPCY \(Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth\)](#) is the tool used to determine Northstar State Care for Children benefits. Minnesota county and tribal social service agencies use the MAPCY when working with foster, kinship, and adoptive families. The MAPCY assessment looks at the needs of a child, including level of parenting that is needed to meet the child's needs, but does not set the Northstar Care basic payment. The basic payment is set by a child's age and provides for a child's food, clothing, shelter, and daily supervision. Beyond the basic payment, Northstar Care also has a supplemental payment that provides for the extra care and attention for many children and youth who are placed in foster, relative care, or adoptive placements. This supplemental benefit level is determined by the MAPCY assessment.

## Pre-MAPCY Assessment Rate

All children entering foster care for the first time are initially assigned at Level D plus basic payment for up to 30 days until a MAPCY assessment is completed.

These rates are prescribed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and are subject to change. Annual cost of care increases may occur annually in July at the discretion of MDHS.

## MAPCY Assessment

The placing case manager is responsible for initiating a MAPCY assessment with foster parents. An assessment is made for each child's placement to determine whether a supplemental rate is appropriate.

### **The MAPCY Rate must be reassessed within 30 days of any the following events:**

- Six months after the completion of the first assessment, annually thereafter.
- Change of child placement location.
- At the request of the financially or legally responsible agency.
- At the request of the commissioner
- At the request of the caregiver

Foster Care providers have the right to appeal a MAPCY Assessment. The MAPCY rate redetermination is based on the child's progress (or lack of progress) and is adjusted accordingly after each assessment is completed. For more information about this process, please contact the child's case manager or supervisor.

## Clothing

The cost of clothing for foster children is included in the monthly basic foster care payment. However, an additional initial clothing allowance may be available for some children if needed. This may be in the form of a voucher to Kohl's or could be reimbursement for the cost of purchase. Please consult with your child's case manager to determine if these funds are available.

Foster parents are expected to monitor adequate provision of clothing for children in care and may need to budget according to seasonal purchases and individual need.

**All clothing and other items bought for a foster child while in care should go with that child when they return home or change placement. It is expected that clothing will be replaced as it wears out or is outgrown, fits properly and is in good condition without stains or tears. It is recommended that foster parents keep an inventory of a child's personal items to refer to when they move.**

## Initial Clothing Allowance

An initial clothing allowance may be available for children only at the time of the first out of home placement.

Maximum allowances are as follows for 2022:

<u>AGE</u>	<u>INITIAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE</u>
0-5	Up to \$710
6-12	Up to \$841
13-20	Up to \$994

The allowance must be used during the first 60 days of the initial placement and must have prior authorization from placing social worker.

### **Guiding Practices:**

- Up to \$150 is allowed immediately for initial, first-time placements if needed. Reimbursement to the foster care provider will be provided as soon as possible after receipts are provided. **Pre-authorization must be obtained from the placing Social Worker.**
- If the child remains in placement and it is/unknown whether the child will return home within 5-10 days, half of the clothing allowance (the \$150 is deducted from half of the initial rate noted above) will be available to the foster care provider upon approval from the placing Social Worker.
- The social worker, in consultation with the foster care provider, will determine the seasonal need for the remaining half of the clothing allowance.

### Clothing Voucher Information and Procedures

#### Allowable Purchases:

Allowable purchases are non-taxable clothing items up to the amount indicated on the voucher. Examples include: clothing, socks, shoes, undergarments, outerwear, hats, gloves, boots, etc. If a provider is unsure if the intended purchase qualifies, they should contact PSU at 763-324-1270 with questions.

#### **Any taxable or unapproved purchases may be subject to recoupment.**

If a provider does not use the full amount noted on the voucher, he/she may request another voucher for the remainder of the approved amount at a later date.

#### Purchasing Process:

1. Foster parent makes initial request for clothing, indicating whether he/she would like:
  - a. Reimbursement for costs incurred
  - b. Anoka County voucher (to be used only at Kohl's).

2. Foster Provider mails the remaining copy of the voucher along with the original store receipt to PSU within 3 business days.
3. If purchases include multiple siblings, the provider sends a separate receipt indicating the name of the child on each receipt.

## Foster Care Minimum Clothing Standard

Following is a guideline noting basic clothing and other item expectations. It is expected that all clothing will be sent with a child when he/she leaves the foster care home. If items are discarded because they are damaged or no longer fit, it is advised that foster parents make a note of that in the child's personal inventory of clothing and belongings. Items should be replaced as needed to maintain this basic, minimum inventory:

- Underpants – 7
- Bras, as needed for female foster children- 2
- Socks – 7 pairs
- Tops – 5
- Sweatshirts/Sweaters – 2
- Pants/Shorts – 5
- Shoes – 2 pairs
- Sleepwear – 2 outfits
- Dress clothing/Special occasion outfit – 1
- Coat/Jacket appropriate for the season – 1
- For winter: Snow pants, cap, scarf, mittens
- Toothbrush
- Book bag or backpack for school- age children
- Comb or hairbrush
- Duffel bag or suitcase (trash bags are never to be used to pack a child's basic belongings)
- Any gifts the child received while in foster care, as well as sporting equipment, musical instruments, bicycles, etc.

## Fire Safety

An inspection by a fire marshal may be required for your home. Your foster care social worker will let you know if this is needed. Information about these inspections can be found here:

[Day Care/Foster Care Inspections](#)

All babysitters and family members should be shown your Emergency Escape Plan, it is a good idea to conduct regular fire and tornado drills with your family. Please be sensitive to children's anxiety/trauma when conducting drills. Using a calm voice to inform your family it is time to practice for emergencies is recommended. Please review this plan with any children new to your home.

Please remember you are required to have your fire extinguisher serviced annually.

## Grievances (see also: Allegations)

## Guns/Weapons

- Your foster care social worker needs to be aware of any weapons in your home.
- Weapons include, but are not limited to: guns, BB guns, air soft guns, hunting knives, swords, tasers, throwing stars, bows and arrows.
- Weapons must be kept in a locked area and separate from ammunition. Weapons must not be visible or accessible to the foster children. Weapons that are not operable must still be locked.

## Hair and Hygiene

### Hair

It is **very important** to obtain social worker/parent permission *before* making changes to a child's hair such as cutting or using chemical treatments on the hair of a foster child.

### Lice

Children should be checked for lice when entering your home. If lice are found, foster parents should immediately report to the child's social worker and treat using common treatments such as Nix or Rid. It is also highly advised to have a professional "lice picker" treat the child's hair. These services have become quite common, they do not require chemical treatments and often guarantee their work. If a child's hair is particularly brittle or scalp is sensitive, please consult a doctor before treating with chemicals.

### **African American hair**

If you are unfamiliar with how to care for the hair of an African American child, please see your foster care social worker, or a hair stylist for resources. Most stores have a section of hair care specifically for AA hair.

## Hygiene

Children coming into care who seem resistant to showers/baths may have trauma related to these acts or may have never been shown how to properly care for themselves. Please be patient, and if a child in your home needs extra support with hygiene please consult their social worker.

## Household Members/Visitors

Every household member aged 13 and over must complete a background check. Overnight guests do not need background checks, however if you have a guest who is staying with you temporarily while they are in between homes, that person is considered a household member and must complete a background check.

Please be aware of where your guests store their personal items. Guest's purses and suitcases may contain items that should be inaccessible to children such as medication, alcohol, lighters, and weapons.

## Home Safety

You are responsible for ensuring that the standards on your home safety checklist are maintained at all times. Consult with your licensing social worker and the child's care team to determine any specific safety needs for each child placed in your home.

[Home Safety Checklist](#)

## ICWA ([Indian Child Welfare Act](#))

### **Indian child Welfare: Policies and Procedures**

- This federal law establishes standards and procedures that state courts must follow before and after American Indian Children are removed from their parents or Indian custodian.
- The law requires social services to notify the tribe of hearings involving child custody matters and allows for intervention by the tribe in any court proceeding where placement is necessary.
- The law requires that a qualified Indian expert be involved with the placement of Indian children

- The law outlines the following order of placement preference:
  - The child’s extended family
  - A tribe-approved foster home
  - A state-approved Indian foster home
  - An Indian-operated or approved institution

## Illness/Injury (see also: Accidents)

## Income Tax

As required by law, Anoka County will send a 1099 to all child foster care providers when \$600+ of payments has paid out short term care or vacation pay (respite, substitute care or foster home supplement) in the previous year.

Unfortunately, Anoka County is not legally able to provide Foster Providers with any type of tax advice or consultation. If you have questions, please consult a tax specialist or federal or state revenue office regarding the proper claiming of foster care payments.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

IRS

State of Minnesota

**[National Foster Parent Association – Federal Tax Guide](#)**

## Insurance/Liability

The Minnesota Department of Human Services provides liability insurance coverage for foster parents under the **Minnesota Joint Underwriting Association**. For more information, please see their [website](#) and [information form](#):

## Internet Safety (see also: Confidentiality, Technology, Social Media)

## Legal Process

Foster parents have an important role in caring for children and have valuable information about how a child is doing physically, emotionally educationally and socially. Under Minnesota law, foster parents are “participants” in juvenile protection court proceedings and have certain rights.

(See a [Guide to Court Proceeding for Foster Parents](#))

When a child is removed from his or her home, there is a legal timeline that starts.

If the child cannot be safely returned home within 72 hours, there will be an Emergency Protective Care Hearing (EPC) at the courthouse. In some cases, the Court may extend this time frame.

If the child is not ordered to be returned home after the EPC, placement will continue in foster care. The county maintains legal and physical custody of the child until the court rules otherwise, but parents do still have the right to participate in decision making for their children. The placing social worker will develop a case plan that all parties are to follow. Foster parents are to be given a copy of this plan by the child’s social worker.

Further hearings will be scheduled by the court to review the progress being made by all of the individuals included in the case plan, including the parents, the children in care, the social worker and other parties who may be connected with the child.

Under Minnesota state law, the goal is to reunify children and parents within six months, however this timeline may be extended by the court.

Most case plans include plans for visitation and other contact between children and their parents. Placing social workers coordinate this plan with foster parents, the children’s parents and others involved. Siblings are to be placed together in the same foster home whenever possible.

Disruption of placements (moving from one foster home to another) is only done when there is no other possible option, as this may create further damage to the child’s emotional health.

## Licensing Actions

A licensing action is what occurs when there is found to be a concern regarding the safety of a home or the actions of a foster parent. Licensing actions can include:

A **Correction Order**: The concern is documented and a plan to correct the concern is agreed upon by the licensing social worker and the foster parent(s). This is the most common type of licensing action and is simply a written documentation of agency efforts to provide feedback and assistance to foster parents.

More serious concerns, such as conditions that cause imminent risk to the health, safety or rights of the children in care can result in the following actions:

- **License Denial**
- **Fine from the Department of Human Services**

- **Conditional license**
- **License Suspension**
- **License Revocation**

For more information about any of these licensing actions, please consult with your licensing social worker.

[Missing Child](#) (see also: [Accidents](#))

[Mandated reporting](#) (see also: [Abuse and Neglect Reporting](#))

## Medical/Dental

At the time of placement, the foster parent should consult the case manager regarding medical/dental insurance. All children in foster care are eligible for Medical Assistance (MA), although they may be covered under their parent’s insurance and have MA as secondary insurance. It is expected that foster parents utilize providers that are approved by the child’s insurance. Consult with your child’s case manager if you need assistance finding a provider. Medical Assistance cards can be mailed out upon request by contacting one of the Placement Support Specialists listed below. If there are any questions regarding the child’s Medical Assistance coverage, **contact a PSU Specialist at the number below.**

The main phone number for PSU Specialists is (763)-324-1240.

## Medical/Dental (non-emergency)

- Prior to accepting a child for placement, be sure to ask if they have any special health care that you will need to provide or arrange for that foster child.
- Foster parents are responsible for arranging routine medical and dental care for foster children and follow-up appointments, such as therapy.
- The “placement letter” you receive at the time of placement or shortly thereafter identifies you as a foster parent and can be presented at a doctor or dentist’s office as verification that you can bring that child in for basic medical and dental services, such as a check- up or non-invasive procedures.
- If a parent has private health insurance under their parent, you will be given that information whenever possible.

- All children that come into foster care are eligible for medical assistance to pay for their medical and dental care. You will receive an MA card or an MA number to give to providers for billing
- When possible, you will be given information about where the child has received services in the past, and direction about whether they should be seen by that provider for future appointments.
- If a child has not had a physical exam before placement, discuss with the child's worker who will take the child for an exam, which is required within the first 30 days of placement. After this, medical and dental examinations are required annually.
- If there is a possibility that a child may have a communicable disease, you must take the child to a doctor and follow the medical treatment plan. Examples of such conditions include pinkeye, impetigo, measles, mumps, scabies, chicken pox, lice and mumps.
- Foster parents DO NOT have the authority to consent for anything other than routine medical and dental care for foster children. Surgery, vaccinations or other invasive procedures must be authorized by a legal parent or case manager. If a doctor recommends more than routine care, contact the child's case manager, who will obtain the necessary permission. Always contact the case manager if you are unsure about consenting to any medical care.
- If you want mileage reimbursement for transporting a foster child to a medical/therapy appointment, call MNET (Minnesota Non-Emergency Transportation Program) to register the child **prior** to the appointment to arrange for reimbursement. This number should be listed on the back of the child's Medical Assistance card. You will need to complete this form: [MTM Trip Log](#).

## Medical and Dental Emergencies

### **In the event of a medical or dental emergency:**

- Immediately seek professional medical care for the child
- Inform the doctor or hospital that you are a foster parent and do not have the authority to give medical consent, which must be given by the parent or guardian. In cases where the state is the guardian, designated representative in the county can sign medical consents.
- During business hours, call the child's case manager immediately. They will obtain consent from the child's parent or guardian or will request a court order.
- If you are unable to reach the child's case manager during business hours, call 763-324-1400 and ask for an on-call worker.
- If it is after normal business hours, call the emergency after-hours number: 763-427-1212.
- Emergency medical, dental, mental health or other health services may be provided for a foster child without consent of the parent or legal guardian when, in the professional's judgement, the risk to the child's life or health is of such a nature that treatment should be

given without delay and the requirement of consent would result in delay or denial of treatment.

## Medical Training

If you are caring for a child who requires special medical cares you may need specific training. This training is documented using the [Medical Monitoring Form](#).

## MA Medical Transportation

Anoka county does not reimburse foster parents for the cost of transportation to medical appointments. Reimbursement may be available through the Medical Assistance transportation program, MTM. Instructions and contact information are available on the [MTM Trip Log](#).

## Foster Homes Physical Plant OR Vehicle Modification Guideline

Foster homes may need to make physical plant modifications or vehicle modifications to provide accessibility for foster children or foster residents placed with them. Examples may include making a vehicle or bathroom handicap accessible.

The following procedures describe the guideline for requesting county funds to pay for such modifications:

- Foster Children who are the financial responsibility of another County but are living in a foster home in Anoka County are not included in this guideline. Private pay and corporate care residents are also not included in this guideline.
- Prior to requesting County funds, other resources must be explored.
  - If the client is on a waiver program, first explore paying for the costs through the waiver.
  - Explore potential funding sources for adaptive equipment/modifications. Revisions to this list will be updated and maintained by the Social Services Supervisor.
- The case manager for the foster child/foster resident will prepare a Special Request to the Board indicating:
  - The client's need for the modification and the costs involved.
  - Any portion of the costs covered by another resource (including labor or supplies contributed by the foster provider, if applicable).

- The remaining costs to the County.
  - The construction company or the provider who is to receive the reimbursement from the County.
- The Social Services Supervisor will review the Special Request to determine:
  - The appropriateness of the request.
  - The extent of efforts made to secure other resources for funding.
- The Social Services Supervisor forwards the request to the Program Planner and the Director for review and Board action.
- PSU notifies foster providers of the Board decision.

## Moving and other changes

- If you are planning to move, notify your licensing worker and the foster child's worker.
- If you move outside of Anoka County, you will need to become licensed by the county in which you move to. If you have foster children in care and wish to bring them with you when you move, discuss this with your licensing worker and with the child's worker.
- If you move within Anoka County, your licensing worker will need to visit your new home to make sure that it meets foster care requirements.

## Normalcy and Prudent Parenting

### Prudent Parent Standard Guidance

Normalcy and prudent parent standard training is required prior to becoming licensed for foster care. This training addresses the need to provide the most age-appropriate and normal childhood experiences for children in foster care while also taking into consideration the need for safety, the wishes of parents and guardians and the requirements of the social services case plan.

## Out-of-Home Placement Plan (OHPP)

- When a child is placed in foster care, the birth parents, the child's case manager, the foster care licensing worker, guardian ad litem and foster parents make up the team that will be working with the child and family. A tool that is used to begin this team process is the Out-of-Home Placement Plan (OHPP).

- The OHPP is to be completed within the first 30 days of placement by the case manager.
- The OHPP documents why the child is in placement and what types of services the child needs.
- When developing the OHPP, tasks are negotiated between all parties, and foster parents will be able to give input and receive direction for what they should be doing to support the needs of the child.
- Foster parents should be given a copy of the completed OHPP for every child they have in placement.

## Overnights (see also: Normalcy and Sleepovers)

## Pets

- Foster families must ensure their pets are immunized and maintained as required by local ordinances and state law. Immunization records must be provided to your Foster Care Licensing Social Worker. This needs to be done both before initial licensing and then annually at relicensing or annual review. Pets may not pose a threat to foster children.
- Foster families with children under the age of six may not have chickens, ducks or reptiles as indoor pets.
- Foster families whose foster children are all age six or older may have chickens, ducks or reptiles under the following circumstances:
- The pet must always be kept in a cage
- You must require a thorough handwashing following the handling of the animals, its food and anything the animal has touched.

## Placements

Children who are placed in foster care may be placed 3 different ways – under a Child Welfare voluntary placement, a Child Protection involuntary placement, or a Children’s Mental Health voluntary placement.

## Voluntary

- Occurs when the legal parents are in agreement with the foster placement.
- A Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) or a Petition is signed.
- The legal parents maintain custody of the child.
- The length of stay normally does not exceed a three-month period except for some cases involving children with special needs.
- If a voluntary placement is going to exceed 90 days, it needs to be approved for an extension by a judge. With the request for the extension, A Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) Petition is usually initiated by the case manager. Voluntary placements need court action at six months and can extend no longer than that without court order.
- A Petition may result in the court giving temporary custody of the child to the County without Court Order.

## Involuntary

- A Child in Need of Protection (CHIPS) or Services Petition is submitted to the court by a concerned party – normally a case manager.
- A court decision may be made indicating that it is in the best interest of the child to be temporarily removed from his/her surroundings.
- Temporary custody of the child is then given to the County and the length of custody can vary from three months to one year, and is usually assigned for six months.
- If the child is unable to return to home at the time of expiration of the court order, a review hearing will be held.
- Currently, permanency must be addressed at one year of placement in out-of-home care.
- A permanency plan must be in place for foster children under 8 who have been in placement for 6 months. However, the court may allow an extension on this timeline.

## Placement Procedures

As required by the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act, the agency must first consider relatives of children who need placement out of their own home. They must also consider people who are defined as “kin” and this term includes people who are not blood relatives, but may have a

significant relationship with the family. Social Services is required to actively search for relatives until the court relieves the agency of that obligation. The agency case manager reviews the following considerations in making foster home placement decisions: The impact of this act for foster providers is that children may come into placement for a short period and then move on to a relative's home.

**Considerations:**

When children are placed into foster care the agency is required to take into consideration the “10 best interest factors” as outlined in statute:

- Current functioning and behaviors
- Medical needs
- Educational needs
- Developmental needs
- History and past experience
- Religious and cultural needs
- Connection with a community, school and faith community
- Interests and talents
- Relationships to current caretakers, parents, siblings and relatives
- Reasonable preference if the court deems a child to be of sufficient age to express
- preferences.

[Minn. Stat., section 260C.212, Subd. 2]

## Emergency Placement Requests

**During regular business hours:**

The foster care licensor will call a foster parent with a summary about the child needing a foster home placement. Little information may be known about the child or reasons for placement at the time of this conversation.

The foster parent may need to discuss the potential placement with their partner, their licensing social worker, and/or the case manager of any other children already placed in their home.

**It is important that the foster parent respond/call back as quickly as possible with a “yes” or “no” because this is usually very urgent and other foster parents may need to be called. Often children will already be in custody when the foster parent is called, waiting to be transported to a foster home.**

If the foster parent agrees to the placement, the child protection case manager will contact the foster parent to coordinate the details of the placement (when the child will be dropped off, special needs, etc.). This case manager may not be the child’s ongoing child protection case manager. You will be notified as soon as possible who the ongoing case manager is or will be.

### **After Hours Emergency Placements (evenings and weekends)**

When a child needs to be placed in foster care during evenings or weekends, a police hold will be placed on the child and after-hours emergency social services staff contact foster providers who have agreed to be called during these times. Your licensing social worker may ask you if you would be willing to receive such calls. The social workers who will be calling after-hours are contracted through Canvas Health. **If you have agreed to accept after hours calls, it is expected you will be available and answer any calls you receive during that time period.**

The police hold lasts for 72 hours (3 business days) and is intended to give social services time to evaluate the situation. Sometimes the social worker may find family to take the child or may return the child home before the hold expires. The case may or may not be brought to court, depending on the situation.

## Planned Placements

For planned placements, when possible, a preplacement visit may take place. This gives the child, case manager, parents and/or current foster parents and the prospective foster parents a chance to get to know each other and discuss the placement. The length of visit can vary from a few hours to an overnight stay. Following the visit, if it is agreed that the placement is appropriate, a date will be set for the child to move in. Often, this could be the same day. In the event the foster parents feel the placement would not be in the best interests of the child or in their family, the reason should be discussed with the case manager. Foster parents should not feel obligated to accept a placement just because a preplacement visit or phone contact has been made.

## Initial Placement:

When the decision is made for a child to be placed in your home, information about the child may not be readily available. This guide may give you an idea of questions to ask the case manager: [\*\*Pre-Placement Information\*\*](#). Before the first court hearing the case manager is working to complete an investigation and gather as much information as possible from all parties. It can take a while before this information is communicated to the foster parent, please be patient during this time.

In addition to the information on the form, foster providers should request the following information:

- Case Manager’s phone number
- Is the placement voluntary or involuntary?

- Is there a pending court hearing which the child is expected to attend
- Reason for placement
- Behavioral history
- Whether the child has been sexually abused or is known to act out sexually
- Whether there are any special issues requiring any special supervision
- If an initial clothing allowance is available
- Child's health insurance information
- Whether there are any restrictions on who may have physical and phone contact with the child.
- What the visitation schedule will be (if known)
- School: Is the child going to be attending school on the next school day? What is the plan for transportation to school?
- Cell phone and other devices: Does the child have a cell phone, iPad, etc.? Should the foster parent take temporary possession of such items until there is a contact plan?

When children are first placed in foster care, it is recommended that the foster provider respectfully check their belongings for drugs, cigarettes, weapons, etc. Although this may be more easily done with younger children's belongings, it may be advisable to do the search of an older child's belongings in the presence of the placing social worker or probation officer, if possible, or if the child is being placed by a police officer, by that individual.

Make a list of the personal belongings they have so that you can be sure they have everything when they go home. It may be helpful to say something like: "I am checking what you have so I can make sure we don't lose any of your things", then write a list of everything the child arrives with.

If clothing, blankets, stuffed animals are soiled or damaged, DO NOT THROW THEM AWAY. You may ask the child if it is ok to wash an item, but unless there is an immediate health risk, it is important to let a child keep comfort items that may remind them of home.

If you are concerned about lice or bed bugs, or know that this is an issue, respectfully have the child change clothes when they arrive and store the clothing and other items in a sealed bag in the garage or other separate area. Ask the child protection case manager for direction if there is a serious problem that requires medical attention or special services.

Initial foster care phone calls, also referred to as "comfort calls," are conversations between parents and caregivers of children in foster care to discuss efforts to ensure child wellbeing. These typically happen within the first 72 hours of placement and are facilitated by a child protection case manager. Please see this document for more information: **Initial Foster Care Phone Calls**

### **Involvement with School**

Foster parents may be requested to enroll the child in school and to attend meetings regarding school progress. Foster parents are not authorized to sign as “parent or guardian” on school forms, but may sign some forms on a separate line identified as “Foster Parent”. Check with the child’s case manager before signing forms.

Foster children are eligible for free school lunch rates. An application should be made to the local school. Some activity fees may be waived or reduced as well for children in foster care. Contact the school for more information.

### **Prior Authorization Required**

- A case manager must be informed when a foster family plans to take a foster child out of town for overnight stays.
- If crossing the state line, prior authorization must be received from the social worker or probation officer.
- Foster parents are not authorized to grant consent for certain activities or procedures. For these you need to obtain the written permission of the child’s legal guardian which is often the legal parents or case manager. Consult with your case manager or probation officer in the event of any of the following situations:
  - Baptism
  - Consent for publicity (example – pictures in newspapers)
  - Licenses that require guardian permission (driver’s license, hunter’s license, marriage license)
  - Medical surgery
  - Piercing
  - Tattoos
  - Name changes
  - Purchase of any motorized vehicle
  - Change of school
  - Haircuts or chemical treatments
  - Potentially “risky” activities including, but not limited to: riding on ATV’s or motorcycles, archery, hunting/shooting.

## Case Manager Home Visits

The case manager is required to visit every child a minimum of once a month. It may be necessary to have more frequent contact. The plan for the case manager contact will be determined based upon the needs of the child and foster care providers.

During these contacts, it is necessary for the case manager to spend some time alone with the child. These visits are usually scheduled in advance; however, it should be understood that the case manager has the right to visit at any time and to visit in private whenever desired.

When private visits or visits out of the foster care provider's home have been held with the child, it is the responsibility of the case manager to inform the foster care provider about pertinent information. At the same time, it is the foster care provider's responsibility to keep the case manager informed of the child's adjustment and behavior.

## Property Damage/Theft

### Purpose

Recognizing that insurance policies may contain substantial deductibles and limitations on property loss claims, it is the purpose of the Foster Provider Damage Fund to reimburse Foster Providers for out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of property destruction or loss. To claim reimbursement, the foster provider must show that appropriate insurance was in effect at the time of the loss, that out-of-pocket expenses were incurred, the destruction or loss was the result of acts of a foster child placed in their care, and the acts of the foster child were beyond the reasonable control of the provider.

### The guidelines for claiming reimbursement are as follows:

- The damage reimbursement is for damage to dwelling, grounds of the Foster Care Provider, furnishings, or equipment. Reimbursement for physical injury or medical expenses are not included or covered by this process.
- Damage reimbursement is not intended for ordinary wear and tear that occurs in a foster setting. Each separate incident that exceeds \$50 in cost may be submitted for reimbursement.
- Damage reimbursement is not available when foster care is private pay, corporate foster care or the child in foster care is the financial responsibility of a county other than Anoka County.
- Foster residents receiving Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) have services based on their programming needs; any damages to the home would be reimbursed through the daily rate as determined by staffing needs and other interventions required and are excluded from the Foster Provider Damage Fund.
- Prior to submitting a claim to the County every reasonable effort shall be taken by the foster provider to determine if their insurance will cover the damage. If a claim against

the homeowner's insurance policy is rejected, then the claim may be considered for reimbursement.

- No claim shall be considered where there is other coverage of that claim or no claim shall be considered when there is another resource to reimburse the damage claim.

### Procedures for requesting reimbursement:

1. The foster provider must notify the foster child's or resident's caseworker as soon as the damage/theft is noticed. In the case of theft, the foster provider must also notify the police immediately. There must be a basis for believing the theft was committed by the foster child or resident.
2. The foster provider must submit to the foster child's or resident's caseworker, within 30 days from the date of occurrence, bills, receipts, estimates of damage, date of occurrence, name of child or adult causing damage and a written description of how the damage occurred. A statement of the foster provider's insurance claim and written denial of any portion of the claim should be included. If a written denial cannot be obtained, the provider should submit documentation of the verbal response of the insurance agent.
3. The caseworker explores recovering all or part of the claim from the foster child or resident and other third-party resources. The caseworker is responsible to arrange for the restitution that is determined.
4. If it is determined that the foster provider's claim has merit and should be considered for reimbursement the case worker will provide all necessary information in a memo and submit it to their supervisor for consideration.
5. The social services supervisor will review all information submitted:
  - a. To determine whether the loss is appropriate for reimbursement.
  - b. To determine that required documentation is complete.
  - c. To determine the extent of efforts made to recover the loss from another resource including the adequacy of insurance coverage held by the foster parents.
6. If item's a, b, and c are met the social services supervisor forwards information to the Manager, who will review all documentation to consider approval. The Manager may approve **claims less than \$2,000**. Approved claims will be sent to the Placement Support Unit (PSU) for payment.
7. For **claims over \$2,000 but less than \$25,000** and if item's a, b, and c are met the social services supervisor forwards information to the Manager who will review all documentation. If the Manager recommends approval, they will prepare a write up for the Director/Asst. Director for review.

8. For Claims exceeding \$25,000, and the Manager recommends approval, they will prepare a Human Services Committee write up for the Director/Asst. Director for review. The claim for reimbursement will be added to the Human Services Committee agenda and if approved will be forwarded to the next County Board meeting for final approval.
9. Once a claim has received the designated approval, PSU will process and make the payment to reimburse the damage claim.

## Records/Paperwork

[Minnesota Child Foster Care Licensing Rule 2960](#) requires licensed child foster care providers to keep written records on children in their care.

It is suggested that foster providers keep a file for each child they care for.

This file should include:

- An ongoing medical log documenting illnesses, injuries, treatments, medical visits and other important health related activities/interventions.
- All paperwork received regarding the child, written grievances and resolutions and other case plan/court directed documentation.
- School records
- Any documentation related to behavior or mental health
- Contact information for family and county staff

The file information does not need to be submitted to the case manager, unless requested once the child is discharged from the foster home. Consult with the child's case manager on whether records should be sent with the child when they leave your home. The foster parent may retain the records if they choose until the child's 19th birthday at which time they must be destroyed/shredded.

## Relicense and Updates

### Relicensing

Your license has an expiration date. Before that date, your licensing social worker will send you the relicensing forms and will arrange to meet with you to complete the relicensing process.

**Prior to this visit you should:**

- Complete the forms mailed to you. Be sure to sign and date all forms that require this. Ask your licensing social worker if you have any questions about the forms.
- Check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure that they are **working and less than 10 years old**. Fix or replace if needed
- Get your fire extinguisher serviced and tagged. An approved company must inspect/service and tag your extinguisher each year ([see list of companies that can do this](#))
- Make sure that all of your annual training is completed and documented. Each person on the license must complete these training requirements. Please see the Anoka County Child Foster Care training website: [Anoka County Foster Care Training](#)

Although your licensing worker will be checking in with you on a yearly basis about all of the above items, there are situations that need to be reported to your licensing worker immediately. These situations include:

- When a household member moves in or out of your home.
- When a foster child moves in or out of your home.
- When any household member experiences a significant health concern.
- When your family is planning to move homes.
- When there is a significant home renovation planned.
- When a call to emergency services (police/medical/fire) is made involving any household member

## Updates

Some licenses are valid for two years. On the “off year” when you do not need to complete a relicensure, your licensing social worker will send you a small packet to complete for an update. They will then meet with you to review these documents. Please remember your yearly training hours will need to be completed at that time.

## Runaways (see also: Accidents)

## Short Term Care (see also: Babysitters)

## School (see also: Placements and Financial)

## Sexual Boundaries

Children who come into your home may have experienced physical or sexual abuse that may or may not have been reported.

Good boundaries around touch and personal space are very important and should be followed by all family members.

When sexually abused children come into your home, you need to look at some of your family rules used to help everyone feel safe. The following ideas may be helpful in protecting you from false allegations, as well as helping foster children feel more secure and less likely to experience abuse by adults or other children.

It is always helpful to know the circumstances of the sexual abuse inflicted upon the child; for example, if a child was abused in a bedroom extra attention should be paid about bedroom rules, however this information may not be known.

## Physical Affection

- Talk to your children about good touch and bad touch. Tell all the children that they should tell adults if they are touched in a scary, confusing or hurtful way; tell until someone believes.
- Get a child's permission before touching them, i.e., is it okay if I give you a hug? This gives a child a sense of control about their own body.
- Touch children in a non-threatening way. Children may be uncomfortable with a hug, but will accept a pat on the back.
- Show normal affection among your own family members. This allows children who have been abused to see what is normal and healthy.
- Discuss personal space. Foster children may tend to cling. Let children know most people are more comfortable if people are not too close to them except with permission. This way children can learn to respect their space as well as the space of others.
- Stop behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable. Children may act out sexualized behavior they have learned before they came to your home. They need to learn such behavior is inappropriate between parents and children or between children.
- Tickling and wrestling often have a sexualized feel to children who have been abused. Be very careful about tickling and wrestling with foster children.
- You must avoid innocent touching that a sexually abused child may interpret as being sexual i.e., such as having a foster child give you a massage/back rub.
- Clearly explain your family privacy rules including bathing, toileting and dressing.
- Use good judgment regarding the nature of video, audio, computer and written materials

to which foster children are exposed.

## Bathroom

- One at a time in the bathroom
- The bathroom door should be closed when in use. If someone wishes to enter they should knock then wait for an okay.
- Let children wash their own genitals as early as possible.
- Use a washcloth when washing children to avoid direct contact with their genitals.
- By age five children can usually bathe themselves with supervision.
- Be quick and business-like when changing the diaper of a sexually abused infant.
- Have the bathing of a younger child done by the parent of the opposite sex of the abuser.

## Supervision

- Foster children, especially those who have been sexually abused, need much more supervision. In particular, children who have learned to play sexual games with other children.
- Restrict play to easily supervised common areas, not bedrooms or bathrooms unless you know the children well.
- Children playing “house” or “doctor” may make these into sexual games.

## Masturbation

Many foster children who have been sexually abused masturbate. (As do many children who have not been sexually abused.) Masturbation should be handled without shaming the child.

- Tell children that masturbation should always be done in private.
- Be aware children can sometimes injure themselves with excessive masturbation or by using objects. If you have concerns about this talk to the child’s social worker.
- A child who masturbates in school can be discouraged by wearing clothing that is belted at the waist.

- If you see a child masturbate, maintain a distance from him/her. You do not want to be associated in the child's mind with any sexual behavior.

## Bedroom

- One child per bed. You may need to check during the night to be sure this rule is enforced. If children have been sleeping together, separate beds may be difficult. Do not shame them for sleeping together, but encourage them to use their own beds.
- Children should dress privately.
- Pajamas may offer more privacy than nightgowns.
- Cover yourself when around foster children. Family nudity is not appropriate when you have foster children.
- Sometimes good nights should be said in the hall rather than in the bedroom. If a child has been sexually abused it could be scary to them if you come into their bedroom.
- Be willing to change bedrooms. Often children are safer if two sexually abused children do not share a bedroom.

These rules/guidelines should be reviewed with all household members as well as babysitters and substitute care providers.

When in doubt, choose caution. Your child's social worker is available to answer questions about foster children in your care.

## Sleepovers/Overnights away

You must obtain permission from a child's case manager before allowing a foster child to go on an overnight. This includes sleepovers at a friend's or relative's home or anywhere else without you.

If the foster child will be staying overnight at another foster home, that foster home's licensing social worker must also give approval. [See Prudent Parenting.](#)

## Smoking

Foster homes must provide smoke-free environment for children in care. Smoking is not allowed inside the home, car or attached garage. Smoking must be done away from children.

This includes cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, vaping or medically prescribed marijuana. Cigarettes, matches and lighters should be stored out of view and out of reach of children.

## Supervision

It is important to remember that children in foster care cannot be supervised by an individual under the age of 18. **It is also important to remember a child's physical age may not be equivalent to their developmental age.** When determining the supervision needs for a child in foster care it is important to consider many things including: the child's case plan, developmental age, behavioral history, comfort level and maturity. Most children in foster care, including teens, require close supervision by an adult. Please consult with the case manager when making supervision plans for the children in your home.

### Infants and Toddlers:

#### **Never leave an infant or toddler:**

- To be supervised by anyone under the age of 18.
- home alone, even briefly.
- to cry without checking on them.
- In a car without the proper car seat
- In a car alone, even briefly.
- Within reach of chemicals, medications, sharp objects, or other hazardous items
- In the bathtub unsupervised, even briefly.
- In the yard unsupervised, even briefly.

### School Age Children:

#### **Never leave children:**

- Supervised by anyone under the age of 18
- Left alone in the car alone, even briefly
- In a car without the appropriate required car seat, booster, or seat belt
- Given access to chemicals or medical products
- Left alone at any time in any place including home, stores, parks

## Teenagers:

### **Never leave teens:**

- Supervised by anyone under the age of 18.
- In a car without a seatbelt
- Alone for any period of time without consulting their social worker
- Alone overnight
- To care for younger children even their sibling or another foster child
- Alone at an overnight with a friend or a relative without consulting their case manager
- Unsupervised with any form of social media and/or internet (music, videos, film, chat rooms etc.) without consulting their case manager
- Unaccounted for at any time

## Support

Foster care providers often report that the most important and useful support they have found is that of other foster care providers. Being able to connect with others who are in similar situations is very important.

**Anoka County** facilitates 2 “Fostering Connections” Meet Ups every month, one on a weekday morning and one on a weekday evening. These groups are a time for you to meet and connect with other providers, as well as time for children to meet and connect as well. Childcare for ages 0-18 and refreshments are provided at every meet-up. You should receive emails every month with information about up-coming meetings.

### **[Link to Meet Up Flyer](#)**

**Foster One** is a non-profit organization run through Substance Church that offers support to foster parents all over the metro area. They offer a variety of services, including support groups. Contact Foster One through their website for more information: **[Foster One](#)**

## Social media (see also: Confidentiality, Technology, Internet Safety)

## Team Members

**Foster parents:** Foster parents are an important part of a team that is charged with supporting the best interest of a child or children in care. Foster Parents help implement the case plan for each child in their home. They are encouraged to respectfully assert their opinions regarding the child's case plan, and to work collaboratively as a member of the team to achieve the goals of the case plan.

The following are the titles and roles of other team members involved in making decisions that support the well-being of the child:

**Screening Social Worker:** Takes initial calls of possible abuse or neglect and will make a determination if further investigation is needed.

**Investigations Social Worker:** Worker who investigates allegations of maltreatment. If a maltreatment finding is substantiated the case is then transferred to an Ongoing Social Worker. This typically will happen within a week of placement.

**Ongoing Social Worker/Case Manager:** Social worker who works with the family and the child and assumes the responsibility for the treatment plan development, implementation, and follow-up.

**Permanency Social Worker:** When it has been determined by the court that reunification with a child's parent is not possible, the case will be moved into the Permanency Unit within child protection, and a Permanency worker will be assigned to identify and coordinate a permanent placement for the child. The goal of this social worker and the team may be to facilitate an adoption or a transfer of legal and physical custody of the child to a family member or foster provider.

**Foster Care Licensing Social Worker:** The social worker who will license the foster home and work directly with foster families to support their efforts in caring for children, provide ongoing training and support, and act as facilitator when necessary to maintain communications.

**Kinship Social Worker:** The kinship social worker has the responsibility of ensuring that all efforts are made to identify family members who might either be able to care for the child or be willing to provide support to the child in other ways. Kinship social workers identify and interview family members who wish to be involved with the child and help to ensure that those family members will be both safe and supportive for the child.

**Guardian ad Litem (GAL):** The GAL is employed by the state and so does not represent the county or the family of the child. They provide oversight of the county agency and provide an additional perspective of what will be most beneficial for the child when decisions are being made. They may make recommendations that are the same or different than the ongoing case manager's. The Guardian ad Litem will meet with the child at least once per month. They report their observations and recommendations to the court.

**Child's Family Members:** While parents and other family members may not be directly caring for the child, it is important that they are involved in the decision-making process whenever it is appropriate. Whenever possible, children should maintain contact with family members who are able to be safe and appropriate supports. The child's case manager is responsible for making decisions about what family members the child may have contact with.

**Child's Attorney:** Children may have a court appointed attorney to help to identify and support the wishes of the child in court proceedings and in other decisions that will directly impact the child.

**Child Foster Care Support Social Worker:** An additional social worker from the Anoka County foster care unit may be assigned to follow cases in which there are children with multiple needs or a large array of services to coordinate. This social worker may provide extra guidance to foster care providers as needed. They may also help identify providers from specialty service areas, coordinate appointments, and take after-hours calls from foster parents experiencing a crisis with a child.

**Others:** There may be additional individuals who are a part of a child's care team. These can include case managers from Children's Mental Health, Development Disabilities, and Long-Term Services and Support (LTSS) workers (LTSS workers assist children to access additional therapeutic and support services). Therapists are also a part of the care team and may participate in meetings to discuss a child's needs and progress. This can include one or more of the following: psychiatrists, physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, behavioral therapists, speech therapists, among others. Teachers and School social workers may also be asked to provide input and recommendations during team meetings.

## Technology (see also: Confidentiality, Internet Safety, Social Media)

### Social Media Ties:

Social media helps youth in foster care fit in with their peers and foster normalcy. Using social media, youth can keep in touch with friends, siblings and others. Ask the child's case manager who the child has permission to talk to and if they are allowed to have their own social media accounts. How to monitor a child's social media accounts should be discussed with the child's case manager.

### Monitoring Technology

Monitoring online activity and cell phone use (texting, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram) can assist youth in learning appropriate technology boundaries and internet safety. Set rules about the use of technology that meet the household structure (Ex: All devices are turned in at 9:00pm, no devices at the dinner table, all passwords are shared with the foster parent, allow foster parent to access all apps/accounts so monitoring can occur, **utilize parental controls on your children's device and with your service provider, etc.**).

**The use of technology is not appropriate for all children. Foster parents should consult with the child's case manager to determine an appropriate plan for technology usage.**

## **Social Media use by Foster Care Providers**

To ensure the confidentiality and safety of children placed in your home. Information about children in foster care is not allowed to be shared on any kind of social media including private pages.

All foster care providers, including relative foster parents, are not the legal guardian of the foster child. They do not have permission to share confidential information about the child or their family. This is in accordance with the “Agreement Between Foster Parents and Child Foster Care Licensing Agency” (DHS-0139) and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Foster care providers must not allow photographs, sketches, videos, or any identifying information to be used in any material that could be available to the public. This includes but is not limited to:

- Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, YouTube, Tik Tok, Twitter and others
- Private or public online groups for foster parents – such as Facebook groups
- identifying information as part of a presentation for a class, article, recognition, etc.
- identifying information in any publication, such as newspapers, company newsletters, magazines, etc.

Examples of identifying information of the child or their birth family could be: name, age, gender, hair color, city of origin, school, address, number of siblings, physical and mental health diagnosis/history, birthdate, date the child entered your home, any information regarding the case, etc.

In some instances, a consent form can be given for the release of confidential information from each child’s legal custodian for usage.

## **Training**

All trainings required prior to licensing must be completed by all license holders and designated substitute care providers. The required 12 hours of training per year must be completed by all license holders.

### **Training required before becoming licensed:**

#### **Anoka County Initial Training**

- Children’s Mental Health Training (2-hour video with certificate of completion)
- Normalcy and Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training (1 hour video & Post-Test)
- Child Passenger Restraint Training - CARS class (3 hour in-person) – for license holders who may care for children aged 8 or under.

- SUIDS/AHT (1 hour series of videos & Post-Test) – for license holders caring for children ages 5 and under.
- Foster Parent Handbook (will be provided by your foster care social worker) & Test

## Training required within the first year of being licensed

- Nuts and Bolts: [Anoka County Foster Care Basics](#)
- [Mandated Reporter Training](#)

## Training required within the first 2 years of being licensed

- Foster Parent College Blended Pre-Service Curriculum (4 in-person sessions with online trainings in-between). Information available here: [Anoka County Ongoing Training](#)

## Training required on a yearly basis after becoming licensed

Anoka County offers many in-person and online free trainings throughout the year

- A total of 12 hours of training is required for EACH license holder every year
- At least 1 hour of a Children’s Mental Health Training yearly
- At least 1 hour of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Training yearly
- Up to 6 hours of your training may be support groups, IEP meetings, or participation in therapy with a foster child.
- It is strongly recommended that at least 4 hours of training per year be in-person (not online).

## Other Training Resources

Please talk to your foster care worker and check our website regularly for other training resources. [Anoka County Child Foster Care Resources](#)

A “[Self-study Questionnaire](#)” should be completed for any trainings that do not provide a certificate of completion. All trainings should be recorded on your “[Record of Training](#)” and given to your foster care worker at the time of relicensing.

## Medical Monitoring Equipment Provider Training

MN Statute Section 245A.155, Subd. 1-5 requires all providers, with placements in their home who are dependent upon medical equipment to sustain their lives, be trained in use of that medical equipment. In other words, the law addresses equipment which **if turned off or not properly used would result in a life-threatening situation; training or experience with this equipment is necessary prior to placement. Training must be documented on a [Medical Monitoring form](#).**

### Who can administer the training?

A physician, registered nurse RN, manufacturer's representative or licensed practical nurse LPN (if delegated this task by a physician or registered nurse) can provide the training. **A video tape of a qualified source providing training is not appropriate unless the qualified source is also present to observe and confirm the training. The parent of the individual, who may have formerly been providing care, is not accepted as a qualified training source.**

## Transportation

Foster parents will be expected to provide transportation for children to all of their appointments. This includes, but is not limited to: parent visits, sibling visits, court, doctor appointments, and therapy. If your children have conflicting schedules and you are unable to provide transportation to all appointments, please consult with the child's case manager and your licensing social worker.

Children in foster care are typically provided transportation to their "home" school, this can take a week or so to get set up. Foster parents will be asked to drive them to school until this is set up.

There is no mileage reimbursement for children's activities, however the amount of driving you are required to do can be addressed in the MAPCY assessment.

Mileage for driving to medical appointments (doctor, dentist, therapy) may be reimbursed by medical assistance. See the "[MTM Trip Log](#)" form for instructions.

## Travel/Vacations

If you plan to take a child out of town or if they will be spending a night away from the foster home, the case manager should be contacted and informed so any questions that may arise can be answered.

Before the child is taken out of state, written permission must be obtained **prior to the trip** through the case manager. Court authorization may also be involved; **minimum of two weeks' notice is requested**. A reachable location, a telephone number and an itinerary must be given prior to departure.

### **Vacation Procedures:**

Obtain permission from the child's case manager before taking the child out of state. They will need to request a court order, and this could take about two weeks. Inform the case manager if you will be taking the child on an overnight trip within the state of Minnesota.

You may be eligible for up to \$20 per day of Vacation Incentive for up to 14 days per year if you take a foster child with you on a family vacation. This would be in addition to your ongoing foster care rate. See the Financial section of this handbook for details on receiving the Vacation Incentive.

If you're unable to include your foster child in your vacation plans, discuss provider relief care with the child's case manager and your foster care social worker well in advance. See the Babysitting and Financial sections of this handbook for more information.

## Video Cameras

Some families may choose to install video cameras in their home to assist with supervision. Cameras should not be placed in areas where privacy is expected such as bathrooms and bedrooms. Video monitors for infants and children with complex needs may be allowed with case manager authorization.

## Visitations

Children's visits with their parents are usually scheduled by the case manager and is specified in the written case plan. Parents have a right to visitations unless denied by court order. Visitation is a very important part of the child's care and the family's reunification plan.

Visits may take place in the child's own home, in the foster home (as agreed to by the provider), at the agency, or elsewhere depending on the individual's situation. Agency personnel, such as the child's case manager, may be present during the visit.

Consider how you may be able to make the visit a good experience for the child and their parent. Speak positively to the child about their parent. Compliment the child in front of their parent. Whenever possible maintain a positive tone during the visit.

As foster providers a challenging task is providing a stable environment and good parent modeling to the foster child. Foster parents must work with the agency and case manager, and maintain a working relationship with the birth/legal parents. The birth parents may have complicated feelings during visitations and may not always express them appropriately. The issues related to the placement may continue during visitation, (e.g., emotional problems, alcoholism, unpredictability, etc.). Before and after visits, the child may experience emotional or behavioral disruption for a period of time. We encourage foster providers to document any changes observed after a visitation.

Any concerns regarding visitation should be discussed with the child's case manager. The case manager can offer assistance in resolving challenges related to visitation. Some parents may recognize the positives to foster care, verbalize their feelings about the placement, and work cooperatively with the agency and the foster providers. Parents are encouraged to be involved in

other ways with their children during placement (e.g., clothing selection, school activities, telephone contacts, etc.), when appropriate.

**WIC** (see also: Financial)