

CHILD CARE, BABYSITTING AND SLEEPOVERS

Policy no.: 3.29

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Policy Cross References: Respite, Block Funding; Basic Foster Care Rate

Legislative References:

PURPOSE: To outline the process for assessing and/or approving child care and babysitting services for foster parents including the applicable rates, and the expectations related to sleepovers for children and youth in care.

POLICY:

1. Child care costs may be provided to foster parent(s) who:
 - a) require child care for employment or educational/employment training purposes; or,
 - b) care for a child that requires child care to meet an identified special need as assessed by a health practitioner and supported by the social worker and the In Care Planning Team.
2. The cost of routine babysitting (e.g. for the foster parent(s) to go on a personal outing such as to dinner or a movie, grocery shopping, their own medical appointment, etc.) is included in the basic foster care rate. Babysitting costs may be provided to a foster parent(s) outside the basic foster care rate to attend to matters related to the child (e.g. school appointment, medical appointment, case conference, training, court, etc.), to attend to matters for another child or youth in care, or to attend training related to fostering.
3. Financial requests and approvals shall be completed electronically on the Financial Benefit Request (FRB) and the approval shall be noted in the case file.
4. Approval of funding for child care and babysitting may be approved up to a maximum period of 6 months or for the duration of the employment or training of the foster parent(s), whichever is shorter in duration, at which time the need for child care shall be reassessed before any further approval is granted.
5. Where a child or youth in care or custody requests permission to have a sleepover at a friend's house, this decision shall be based on the child or youth's care/custody status; age and developmental level; any complex needs that may impact readiness for a sleepover; the type of placement where they reside; and the level of knowledge of the friend, their family, and their home environment.

PROCEDURES:**Child Care**

1. Child care is a regularly scheduled arrangement to provide care to a child under the age of 13 years, or in exceptional circumstances for a child 13-15 years of age that is unable to be left unattended due to a special need. The social worker shall assess the need for child care services on a case by case basis and funding may be approved for child care services for a foster parent(s) where:
 - a) the foster parent(s) requires child care for employment or educational/employment training purposes; or
 - b) a health practitioner has recommended the child attend a child care facility to meet an identified special need, and the recommendation is supported by the social worker and the In Care Planning Team.
2. Based on the assessment and recommendation of the social worker:
 - a) a supervisor may approve up to 45 hours of child care per week; or
 - b) a zone manager may approve funding for child care that exceeds 45 hours per week if necessary.
3. Where child care is approved to accommodate the employment or educational/employment training of a foster parent, the social worker shall obtain the name, address and contact number for the employer or training institution of the foster parent.
4. Where full-time child care is approved, the social worker shall work with the foster parent(s) to secure a placement for the child in a regulated child care centre or regulated family child care home that can best meet the needs of the child and the foster family, with consideration of the rates and any potential transportation costs that may apply. Where possible, siblings shall be cared for by the same child care provider. If the foster parent's own child(ren) is already being cared for by a non-regulated child care provider and the foster parent(s) prefers to have all the children be cared for by the same provider, or if there is no space available in a regulated child care centre or regulated child care home, a non-regulated child care provider may be used.
5. The social worker shall contact the Child Care Services Subsidy Program to discuss the child's placement with a child care provider and make an application for coverage under the subsidy program. Foster parents are not eligible to apply for reimbursement of private mileage under the subsidy program, as they are receiving monies for transportation in the basic foster care rate and block funding.
6. Where it is determined that a child requires one-to-one or additional support while in a regulated child care centre or family child care home, the social worker shall discuss this need with the Child Care Services' Inclusion Support Program to determine next steps.
7. Where the foster parent(s) intends to hire or use a unregulated child care provider due to a space not being available in a regulated child care centre or regulated family child care home, or to accommodate the child to attend the same child care provider as the child(ren) of the foster parent(s), the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) of the following roles and responsibilities and ensure that all requirements are met:

Role of Foster Parent(s):

- a) ensure the potential child care provider is at least 16 years of age;
- b) obtain a criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check (if 18 years of age or older) from the potential child care provider;
- c) advise the social worker if the potential child care provider has been charged with or has been convicted of a criminal offence, as depending on the nature of offence, the social worker may not provide approval for the foster parent(s) to use the child care provider;
- d) obtain two references from non-relatives, if possible from references that can speak to the potential child care provider's child care knowledge, skills and experience;
- e) ensure the potential child care provider will be in compliance with legislative requirements (e.g. is caring only for the number of children allowable by law, etc.); and
- f) comply with the Canada Revenue Agency's guidelines, which may be found online at: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/pyrll/clcltng/spelsttns/crgvr-eng.html>

Role of the Social Worker:

- a) ensure that a Provincial Court Check is completed (if 18 years of age or older); and
- b) complete a *Child Protection Clearance Check* from any areas of the province and from any other jurisdictions in which the potential child care provider has previously resided.

Where there has been previous contact with a child protection agency, the social worker shall explore the circumstances of that contact. Contact shall be made with any social worker previously involved. All relevant information shall be reviewed, and there shall be supervisory consultation before a decision is made whether to approve that the child be cared for by the potential child care provider. Potential child care providers who have unresolved child protection concerns shall not be approved to provide child care to a child in care or custody of a manager.

Babysitting

8. Babysitting is short term care for a child under 13 years of age to provide the foster parent an ability to attend to personal and/or child related matters. The social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that it is the responsibility of the foster parent(s), in consultation with the social worker, to use their discretion in identifying an appropriate babysitter. A foster parent(s) may hire a babysitter who they have known for at least one year who they deem, based on the person's age, maturity and skills, will meet the needs of the child and provide quality care for the duration that babysitting is required. If the foster parent(s) has not known the person for at least one year, they are required to obtain two references from non-relatives who have known the potential babysitter for at least one year to assist in their assessment of whether, based on the person's age, maturity and skills, the babysitter will meet the needs of the child and provide quality care for the duration that babysitting is required

9. Funding to cover the cost of routine babysitting (e.g. for the foster parent(s) to go on a personal outing such as to dinner or a movie, grocery shopping, their own medical appointment, etc.) is included in the basic foster care rate. The social worker shall assess the need for additional hourly babysitting funding on a case by case basis and may recommend approval of funding for babysitting for a foster parent(s) to attend to matters related to the child or youth (e.g. school appointment, medical appointment, case conference, training, court, etc.), to attend to matters for another child or youth in the care or custody of a manager, or to attend training related to fostering. For overnight care related to these same reasons, please refer to the *Respite* policy.
10. Based on the assessment and recommendation of the social worker:
 - a) a supervisor may approve up to a maximum of 10 hours of babysitting per week; and
 - b) a zone manager may approve requests for funding for babysitting that exceed 10 hours per week if necessary.

Rates

11. The maximum rates for payment for child care outside the foster home in a regulated child care centre are as follows:

Age Group	Full Day (up to 8.5 hours)	Part Day (up to 4.5 hours incl. lunch)	Hourly After 8.5 hours
Birth up to 2 years	\$44	\$23	\$5
2-12 years (incl. kindergarten)	\$30	\$16	\$3.50
After School Care (when school is in session)			\$14 per day

12. Where child care is approved for a child enrolled in a regulated child care centre, and funding for the top-up fees charged by the centre have been requested, the social worker in consultation with the supervisor shall determine that such is necessary in order to maintain the placement for the child in the centre. Approval for top-up fees shall be at the authority level of the individual approving child care hours (e.g. the supervisor may approve top-up fees for up to 45 hours of child care per week).

13. The rates for payment for child care where the foster parent(s) is the employer are as follows:

Number of Children	Rate
One - two children	Minimum wage hourly rate
More than two children	Up to a maximum of \$15 per hour

14. The rates for payment of babysitting where the foster parent is the employer are as follows:

Number of Children	Rate
One - two children	Minimum wage hourly rate
More than two children	Up to a maximum of \$15 per hour

15. If the foster parent(s) is considered the employer for an hourly child care provider or babysitter, the employer benefits are in addition to the hourly respite rate outlined in this policy.
16. In situations where the foster parent(s) is considered the employer for a service not covered under block-funding, (e.g. child care, babysitting, tutoring or hourly respite approved in addition to block funding), the cost of associated employer benefits and/or payroll administration fees shall be approved by the individual approving the original request (e.g. if a supervisor has the authority to approve child care hours they would also approve the associated employer benefits and administration fees).

Sleepovers (Foster Home Placement)

17. Where a child or youth is in a *Protective Care Agreement (PCA)*, interim care, interim custody or temporary custody and is residing in a foster home, makes a request to go to an identified friend’s home for a sleepover, the social worker shall contact the child or youth’s parent(s), who is named on the *PCA* or the Court documents related to the removal and/or custody status of the child or youth, to discuss their views. Where more than one parent is named all parents must be contacted. The social worker shall share the sleepover policy with the parent(s) and document in the file whether the parent(s) is in agreement with allowing the foster parent(s) to determine whether the child or youth can attend a sleepover with the friend. The social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) of the views of the child or youth’s parent(s).
- a) If one or more of the parents are **not** in agreement with the child or youth attending a sleepover, the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that the child or youth is not permitted to attend the sleepover.
 - b) If all the parents named in the above noted documents, are in agreement with the foster parent(s) making this decision, the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that formal record checks and/or assessment are not required; however, in

making this decision they are required to:

- i. have knowledge of the friend, the friend's family and home environment, including their address and phone number;
- ii. consider the age of the friend in relation to the child or youth;
- iii. believe that the child or youth is developmentally ready to attend the sleepover;
- iv. believe that the child or youth will be safe and provided adequate supervision and care to meet their needs;
- v. take into consideration any complex needs (e.g. emotional, behavioral, medical) a child or youth may have that could impact their readiness for the sleepover;
- vi. have a conversation with the friend's parent(s), including whether or not they will be at home while the child or youth is attending the sleepover;
- vii. advise the friend's parent(s) of necessary information about any special care needs of the child or youth (e.g. allergies, asthma, bedwetting, medication) to ensure the parent(s) is aware and comfortable responding if the child or youth requires support/assistance;
- viii. have a plan developed for the child or youth should an emergency occur which includes the emergency contact information, including telephone number(s) for the foster parent(s); and
- ix. make contact with the friend's parent(s) while the child or youth is attending the sleepover.

- c) The social worker shall advise the foster parent that if the foster parent(s) has concerns regarding one or more of the above requirements and are unsure as to whether or not they should agree to allow a child or youth to attend a sleepover at a friend's house, they must consult with the social worker before the child or youth is permitted to attend the sleepover.

18. Where a child or youth is in continuous custody, the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that the foster parent(s) may make the decision to allow a child or youth to attend a sleepover with a friend and that formal record checks and/or assessment are not required. The social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that in determining whether to allow a child or youth to attend a sleepover the foster parent(s) is required to:

- a) have knowledge of the friend, the friend's family and home environment, including their address and phone number;
- b) believes that the child or youth is developmentally ready to attend the sleepover;
- c) considers the age of the friend in relation to the child or youth;
- d) believes that the child or youth will be safe and provided adequate supervision and care to meet their needs;
- e) takes into consideration any complex needs (e.g. emotional, behavioral, medical, etc.) a child or youth may have that could impact their readiness for the sleepover;
- f) has a conversation with the friend's parent(s), including whether or not they will be at home while the child or youth is attending the sleepover;
- g) advised the friend's parent(s) of necessary information about any special care needs of the child or youth (e.g. allergies, asthma, bedwetting, medication) to ensure the

parent is aware and comfortable responding if the child or youth requires support/assistance;

- h) has a plan developed for the child or youth should an emergency occur which includes the emergency contact information, including telephone number(s) for the foster parent(s); and
- i) makes contact with the friend's parent(s) while the child or youth is attending the sleepover.

The social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that if the foster parent(s) have concerns regarding one or more of the above requirements and are unsure as to whether or not they should agree to allow a child or youth to attend a sleepover at a friend's house, the foster parent(s) must consult with the social worker before the child or youth is permitted to attend a sleepover.

Sleepovers (Other Residential Placements)

19. Where a child or youth in a *PCA*, interim care, interim custody or temporary custody requests a sleepover with an identified friend and they are residing in a placement resource other than a foster home (e.g. Group Home, ILA, EPH), the social worker shall contact the child or youth's parent(s), who is identified on the *PCA* or the Court documents related to the removal and/or custody status of the child or youth, to discuss their views. Where more than one parent is named all parents must be contacted. The social worker shall share the sleepover policy with the parent(s) and document in the file whether the parent(s) is in agreement with the sleepover.
 - a) If one or more of the parents are **not** in agreement the social worker shall advise the placement resource that the child or youth is not permitted to attend the sleepover.
 - b) If all parents named in the above noted documents are in agreement, the social worker shall advise the parent(s) that the final decision regarding the sleepover will not be made until the social worker, in consultation with the placement resource and other relevant and/or appropriate information sources, has:
 - i. obtained reasonable information related to the friend, the friend's family and home environment, including their address and phone number from the child or youth, the parent(s), the placement resource, and/or other appropriate information source(s);
 - ii. obtained information regarding the child or youth's developmental readiness to attend the sleepover from the parent(s), the placement resource and/or other appropriate information sources if required (e.g. the child or youth's counselor, doctor(s) or other professionals working with the child or youth) and as a result determined that the child or youth is developmentally ready to attend the sleepover;
 - iii. considered the age of the friend in relation to the child or youth;
 - iv. considered any complex needs (e.g. emotional, behavioral, medical) a child or youth may have that could impact their readiness for the sleepover. Where appropriate, this should include consultation with counselors, doctors and/or other professionals working with the child or youth;
 - v. had a conversation with the friend's parent(s), including whether they will

- vi. be at home while the child or youth is attending the sleepover; obtained information to indicate the child or youth will be safe and provided adequate supervision and care to meet their needs;
 - vii. advised the friend's parent(s) of necessary information about any special care needs of the child or youth (e.g. allergies, asthma, bedwetting, medication) to ensure the parent(s) is aware and comfortable responding if the child or youth requires support/assistance;
 - viii. ensured a plan is developed for the child or youth should an emergency occur which includes the emergency contact information, including providing telephone number(s) for the placement resource to the friend's parent(s); and
 - ix. ensured the placement resource will contact the friend's parent(s) while the child or youth is attending the sleepover.
20. The social worker in consultation with the supervisor and the placement resource shall consider all information obtained in determining if approval will be given for the requested sleepover. The child or youth's parent(s) shall be advised of the final decision.
21. Where a child or youth in continuous custody requests a sleepover with an identified friend and they are residing in a placement resource other than a foster home (e.g. Group Home, ILA, EPH), the final decision regarding the sleepover will not be made until the social worker in consultation with the placement resource and other relevant and/or appropriate information sources has:
- a) obtained reasonable information related to the friend, the friend's family and home environment, including their address and phone number;
 - b) obtained information regarding the child or youth's developmental readiness to attend the sleepover from the parent(s), the placement resource and/or other appropriate information sources if required (e.g. the child or youth's counselor, doctor(s) or other professionals working with the child or youth) and as a result determined that the child or youth is developmentally ready to attend the sleepover;
 - c) considered the age of the friend in relation to the child or youth;
 - d) taken into consideration any complex needs (e.g. emotional, behavioral, medical) a child or youth may have that could impact their readiness for the sleepover. Where appropriate, this should include consultation with counselors, doctors and/or other professionals working with the child or youth;
 - e) had a conversation with the friend's parent(s) including whether they will be at home while the child or youth is attending the sleepover;
 - f) obtained information to indicate the child or youth will be safe and provided adequate supervision and care to meet their needs;
 - g) advised the friend's parent(s) of necessary information about any special care needs of the child or youth (e.g. allergies, asthma, bedwetting, medication) to ensure the parent is aware and comfortable responding if the child or youth requires support/assistance;
 - h) ensured the plan should an emergency occur which includes the emergency contact information, including providing telephone number(s) for the placement resource to the friend's parent(s); and
 - i) ensured the placement resource will make contact with the friend's parent(s) while the child or youth is attending the sleepover.

22. The social worker in consultation with the supervisor and the placement resource, shall consider all information obtained in determining if approval will be given for the requested sleepover.

EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY:

1. If a youth over age 16 years cannot be left unattended due to documented complex needs, the ***Respite*** policy shall be followed rather than the *Child Care, Babysitting* and *Sleepover* policy.
2. In exceptional circumstances and based on the needs of the child and/or foster family, the ADM may approve funding for child care or babysitting for reasons other than those identified in this policy if child care or babysitting is necessary to meet the needs of the child or foster family (e.g. family emergency, significant event in the life of the foster family, etc.) or approve rates of payment for child care or babysitting that exceed the rates identified in this policy if necessary.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS:

- *Child Protection Clearance Check* form