

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services
(CCDCFS)
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter: Substitute Care
Policy Number: 6.02.13
Policy Name: Payments to Foster Parents

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Approved By: Cynthia G. Weiskittel

PURPOSE: To outline guidelines for reimbursement by CCDCFS to CCDCFS-licensed foster parents and to outline the procedures to obtain reimbursement. This policy is not meant to create contractual or other legal obligations. The policy is intended to provide general information on the subject area. Any and all payments issued under this policy are subject to the sole discretion of CCDCFS.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all foster parents licensed by CCDCFS and CCDCFS staff.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

A. DAILY BOARD RATES (Per Diem)

1. Foster parents receive a set daily board rate (also called a per diem) for each foster child in their home. The board rate is paid to the foster parent to provide for the child. The per diem is to be applied toward the typical daily cost of food, shelter, laundry, basic medical supplies (such as bandages and non-prescription items), household incidentals, toiletry articles for the child's, basic school needs and supplies, haircuts, transportation, recreational activities and incidentals. Foster parents should not expect additional reimbursement for these expenses.
2. The board rate is paid on a monthly basis for the number of days the foster child was in the home the previous month. Board rates are paid for the day of placement but not for the day of discharge. Foster parents receive one monthly board check which includes reimbursement for all foster children in the home as well as the monthly clothing allowance for each child.
3. Foster care per diems are subject to change. The Agency will provide written notification of any change and will give thirty (30) calendar days' notice of the change.

B. SPECIAL BOARD RATES

1. The determination of special board rates or payments in excess of the per diem rate is within the sole and complete discretion of CCDCFS.
2. Children may be eligible to receive a temporary financial assistance change in their per diem. This is added on to the daily board rate already being paid to the foster parent for the child. Some examples of when the child may be eligible for an add on include:
 - a. Caregiver is providing additional support, service or supervision to the child for a need which is temporary.
 - b. Child has an unusual situation or special circumstance which would benefit from additional financial assistance.
3. The child's Worker of Record (WOR) or Resource Manager (RM) may initiate the request for special board rate consideration by completing the *Request for Board Rate Add-On Form* in collaboration with the foster caregiver. The caregiver may be required to provide the agency additional documentation of the need and/or costs associated with the need.
4. The completed and signed *Request for Board Rate Add-On Form* along with all supporting documentation is to be forwarded to the designated Resource Management Senior Supervisor. The Resource Management Senior Supervisor will make the final approval decision.
5. All approved add-ons will be re-evaluated at regular intervals as determined by the Resource Management Senior Supervisor to determine if the unique need still exists.
6. The "add-on" board rate is not automatically transferable. If the add-on board rate is in effect at the time of placement into another CCDCFS foster home, it will be reassessed and may be continued if the unique need still exists.

C. CLOTHING

1. Children coming into custody receive an initial clothing order, if needed. Additional clothing orders are not provided automatically. There must be an actual documented need. The child's WOR and/or RM (with the help of the foster caregiver) are required to conduct an inventory of the child's existing clothing.
2. Included in the board check (per diem) is a monthly clothing allowance. Foster parents are required to use this allowance to meet the child's ongoing clothing needs.

D. SCHOOL FEES

1. Foster parents are expected to pay for the daily costs associated with school from the per diem. Basic school supplies, such as pencils, pens, crayons, rulers, notebooks, construction paper, scissors, backpacks, lunch boxes, paper, etc. are not reimbursable. The cost of field trips, transportation, etc. is to be paid from the board check.
2. Foster parents may be reimbursed for specific education-related expenses such as lab fees, rental/purchase of books, workbooks and materials for special courses such as chemistry, biology, home economics or vocational education courses.
3. Foster parents can claim reimbursement by completing *Non-Travel Expense Report Form*, attaching the original receipts and forwarding the document to the child's WOR or RM. The determination of whether reimbursement will be offered is in the sole discretion of CCDCFS.
4. If a foster parent is unsure whether an expense is reimbursable, s/he should consult with the child's WOR or RM before making the expenditure.
5. School uniforms which are required can be purchased using a purchase order clothing voucher if it is the first time that a child is going to school from an agency licensed foster home.
6. Tuition for private school will not be reimbursed or paid by the agency. Caregivers wishing to enroll a child in a private or parochial school must have prior agency approval from the agency's Director. If approved, funding for a private school education is the responsibility of the foster parent. Scholarships may be available for the foster child through other non-CCDCFS sources.
7. Fees for extracurricular activities such as sports, band, theater, choir, club memberships, etc. are to be paid from the per diem. Agency assistance may be provided towards the purchase of special clothing/uniforms or equipment.
8. Life skills training for a youth who will be emancipating may be reimbursed through independent living funds.

E. SCHOOL LUNCHES

1. Foster children may be eligible for free school lunches. Application for each child must be made through the local school for consideration if a lunch program is available.
2. If the foster child is attending a Cleveland Public School, the foster parent may complete the application to obtain free lunches for the child. Foster parent personal income is not considered as the child's income. In completing the application, the foster parent should write, "No Income-Child in the Custody of CCDCFS".

3. If the foster child is enrolled in another public-school system, the foster parent should contact the school to determine if a free lunch program is available and how to apply for the child.
4. The child's WOR is to assist the foster parent in completing any necessary paperwork and providing any required documentation.
5. If the foster child is not eligible for free lunch, the lunch fees must be paid from the board check and are not reimbursable.

F. SUMMER SCHOOL AND TUTORING

1. Foster children may require summer school or special tutoring based on their individual educational needs.
2. Before enrolling a foster child in summer school or tutoring program, the foster caregiver must receive prior approval from the child's WOR. A letter from the school documenting the child's need for summer school or tutoring must be sent to the child's WOR.
3. CCDCFS shall be directly billed for costs associated with an approved summer school or tutoring program.

G. TRANSPORTATION AND MILEAGE

1. Transportation of foster children to and from school, recreational activities, church, sporting events, shopping, etc. are considered the daily routine of any family and are not reimbursable expenses. This is to be paid for from the monthly per diem. Other transportation costs NOT REIMBURSED are:
 - a. Daycare drop off and pick-up
 - b. Any recreational travel such as games, concerts, amusement park, etc.
 - c. Extracurricular activities for school, church, etc.
 - d. Prescription pick-up and refills
2. Foster caregivers are eligible for reimbursement for mileage and parking fees when transporting a foster child to agency authorized appointments such as medical, dental, eye, counseling, therapy or family visits.
 - a. Foster parents are eligible for reimbursement for the actual miles when using their own vehicle or for the actual costs of public transportation when they accompany the child.
 - b. For reimbursement, the foster parent must complete the *Travel Expense Report Form* detailing mileage and other costs. Dated original receipts must be attached to the form for tolls, parking, bus, taxi, etc. The forms and receipts must be submitted to the foster caregiver's RM on a monthly basis.

- c. The maximum allowable reimbursement amount for parking without a receipt is \$2.00.
3. Foster parents who are transporting a foster child to a school outside of the foster caregiver's home school district may be reimbursed for mileage.
4. Transportation reimbursement forms are to be filled out and turned in monthly to avoid delays in processing. CCDCFs cannot guarantee reimbursement for requests going back over two months.

H. PRESCRIPTIONS AND OVER-THE-COUNTER HEALTH SUPPLIES

1. Non-prescription medications (such as over the counter cold medicines, baby aspirin, cough medicine, children's Tylenol, vitamins, etc.) are not reimbursable. In addition, health care and first aid supplies (such as band-aids, gauze, ace bandages, ice packs, alcohol, etc.) are not reimbursable. These items should be paid for from the monthly board check.
2. All foster care children are to be on HMO Medicaid Plans. Foster parents must report any problems or issues with medical coverage to CCDCFs immediately.
3. Foster parents must use pharmacies which accept either Healthy Start or Medicaid for all prescriptions. If the foster child has not yet received the medical card, the foster parent should contact the child's WOR and arrange for the child to be placed on Healthy Start. Healthy Start can be set up within 24 hours of the request. AFTER-HOURS, the foster parent may request a Special Purchase Authorization from the Hotline for EMERGENCY PRESCRIPTIONS for a newly placed child.
4. If the medication prescribed is not covered by insurance, the foster parent must contact the child's WOR who will discuss the issue with the Health Care Unit.
5. If the agency is unable to make payment arrangements directly with the pharmacy and as a result the foster caregiver must pay for a prescription, the receipt should be submitted to the foster home's RM with a completed *Non-Travel Expense Report Form*.

I. HEALTH CARE (MEDICAL / DENTAL / EYE CARE)

1. Foster caregivers cannot sign for or offer payment for any health care related services. Only CCDCFs can authorize treatment and/or payment.
2. The agency is legally responsible for the health care of children in their custody.
3. The agency has developed guidelines aimed at protecting foster caregivers from assuming any costs or financial liabilities relating to a foster child's health care needs.

J. FOOD COSTS

1. All meals must be provided by the foster caregiver and paid from the per diem.
2. Foster children under the age of five years may be eligible for supplemental food through the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) Program. Foster parent income is not considered when determining WIC eligibility.
 - a. A doctor's referral indicating nutritional risk is required. Referral forms are available at the nearest WIC office. Many doctors and most clinics have the forms as well.
 - b. WIC can provide formula, cereal, juice, eggs, cheese and special milks for eligible children.
 - c. In Cuyahoga County, WIC issues coupons for the supplemental foods/formulas.

K. FOSTER PARENT TRAINING REIMBURSEMENTS

(Also see CCDCFS Policy 6.02.03 and OAC 5101:2-5-38)

Training reimbursements are made to compensate foster parents for the costs of attending training such as childcare, travel, parking, etc. Therefore, no additional reimbursements will be made for any associated costs of attending training. Since reimbursement is available, no children may be brought to training.

1. **Reimbursements for Pre-Service Training for a CCDCFS licensed foster home:**
 - a. Applicants who **complete** the CCDCFS Pre-Service Training will be eligible to receive training reimbursement in the amount of \$10 per hour up to thirty-six (36) hours or \$360.
 - b. Applicants completing Pre-Service Training will not be eligible to receive the training reimbursement until licensed as foster parents.
 - c. CCDCFS reserves the right to decline to make a reimbursement payment for Pre-Service training if:
 - 1) The applicant did not complete the training at CCDCFS
 - 2) The applicant did not attend a scheduled CCDCFS Pre-Service Training class
2. **Reimbursements for Ongoing Training for a CCDCFS licensed foster home:**
 - a. Foster caregivers shall receive stipend payments for compensation for the cost of attending training. Such stipend payments must be made to the

foster caregiver within sixty (60) calendar days of completion of the training event.

- b. The maximum amount of reimbursement will be for forty (40) hours for a family foster home, and (60) hours for a specialized foster home, which is the minimum number of training hours required during the two-year period after the foster caregiver's date of certification.

L. LIFE BOOK

1. Foster caregivers are expected to assist in the creation of a life book. Foster caregivers are eligible to receive a yearly reimbursement stipend of \$30.00 to help offset the costs of maintaining a life book for children in their care.
2. If the child is in more than one CCDCFS licensed foster home during a year, each family may claim up to the allowable reimbursable rate for life book expenses for that child.
3. Original receipts for photographic film, processing and other life book materials must be submitted along with a completed *Non-Travel Expense Report Form* to the child's WOR or RM for reimbursement.

M. RESPITE CARE, BABYSITTING AND DAYCARE

1. CCDCFS does not pay for babysitting for foster children. Foster caregivers are expected to use the monthly board check to pay for this expense.
2. Foster caregivers are encouraged to utilize their approved alternate and emergency caregivers for the provision of respite care and babysitting.
3. Foster caregivers can be reimbursed \$25/child when they utilize another licensed caregiver for respite. All other respite care or babysitting arrangements must be approved by the agency.
4. Foster caregivers may be eligible for financial assistance for daycare expenses. This assistance is subject to termination with thirty (30) days written notification. The following guidelines apply:
 - a. Funding is subject to change without notice.
 - b. Foster caregivers must work full-time to qualify. If a married couple, one must work full-time and the other at least part-time. Full time is defined as thirty-two (32) hours minimum and part-time is defined as at least sixteen (16) hours minimum.
 - c. All foster caregivers must use a Step Up To Quality county certified day care center or certified in-home day care provider (for infants only) in order to be eligible for financial assistance.

- d. The authorization time period may be up to twelve months and must be renewed by the Resource Manager prior to the end date payment to continue in a timely manner.
- e. The day care provider is expected to maintain a supply of invoice forms for billing purposes.
- f. Foster caregivers are responsible for the co-payment (if applicable)

As part of the day care application process:

- 1) Foster caregiver completes the Day Care Application and returns the completed form to their RM with employment verifications.
- 2) The RM completes the "Notice of Day Care Placement and Payment Form."
- 3) The RM provides the foster caregiver with a copy of the following:
 - Notice of Day Care Placement
 - Payment Form
 - Provider Instructions Letter, and
 - Invoice Form
- 4) The foster caregiver must provide the day care provider, on or before the first day of the child's attendance, with a copy of the following:
 - Notice of Day Care Placement
 - Payment Form
 - Provider Instructions Letter, and
 - Invoice Form

N. REIMBURSEMENT TO FOSTER PARENTS FOR DAMAGES DONE BY A FOSTER CHILD IN THEIR CARE

1. **CCDCFS does not, as a common practice, reimburse foster caregivers for damages done by a child in their care.** Foster caregivers are encouraged to consult their homeowner's insurance policy for coverage.
2. In extraordinary situations, CCDCFS may, in its sole discretion, consider reimbursement on a case by case basis.
 - a. If the foster caregiver feels that the damage done by the child is an unusual situation, they may request payment by CCDCFS by submitting a written request to their RM including a summary of the damage, a summary of the incident in which the damage occurred, two estimates for repair and any other documentation which may be helpful.
 - b. The RM will submit the documentation to the Deputy Director of Resources and Placement or designee for consideration.

- c. The Deputy Director or designee will make every effort to make a decision within seven (7) days of receipt of the documentation. The Deputy Director may request additional information or clarification which may delay the decision.
- d. If the agency agrees to pay for a portion or all of the damage, the foster caregiver **may** be required to repair the damage, pay for the costs and submit the paid invoices to the RM for reimbursement at the agreed upon amount.

O. CAMP, RECREATIONAL AND SPECIAL INTEREST ACTIVITIES AND ASSOCIATED PARTICIPATION EXPENSES

- 1. The agency does not usually pay for these expenses, although at times money becomes available for summer camp. Foster parents are expected to pay for any other of these expenses from the per diem.
- 2. Foster caregivers are encouraged to explore scholarships or other forms of financial aid to offset the costs.
- 3. Holidays and Birthdays
 - a. Gifts for birthdays are to be purchased from the per diem.
 - b. Seasonal holiday gifts **may** be obtained through the annual Giving Tree program at CCDCFS, but gift giving should be supplemented from the per diem. Foster caregivers should contact the child's WOR to sign up for the program.
- 4. Graduation and Extra-Curricular School Activities
 - a. High School Graduation
 - 1) With appropriate pre-approval, the expenses associated with graduation which includes class rings, photos, announcements, cap/gown, fees, etc. will be reimbursed up to a total of \$750.00.
 - 2) Foster caregivers should contact the child's WOR to pre-approve any expenses and obtain reimbursement.
 - b. Extra-curricular Activities
 - 1) Extraordinary or unusual extra-curricular activities that enhance the child's social, emotional, academic or physical well-being will be considered on a case by case basis.
 - 2) Requests must be made in advance, in writing, to the Deputy Director of Resources and Placement. It must include an estimate of the expense, the benefit the child will receive and the child's name, date of birth, Resource Manager's name and the WOR's name.

P. TEEN MOTHERS

1. Should a youth in the custody of the agency become pregnant, the expectant teen mother may receive an additional clothing order voucher to purchase maternity clothing.
2. If the baby is taken into agency custody, the infant may receive a per diem, clothing order voucher and medical card.
3. If NO CUSTODY is taken, a non-custody per diem will be paid for the child.

Q. INSURANCES/LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE FOSTER FAMILY

1. CCDCFS does not provide health insurance for the foster family. The agency will provide health coverage only for children who are in the custody of CCDCFS.
2. CCDCFS does not offer liability insurance to foster parents. Caregivers are urged to consult their homeowner's insurance policy for coverage.
3. CCDCFS does not offer or pay for any legal services for foster parents related to the proper performance. Caregivers must secure and pay for their own legal representation.
4. Caregivers are urged to contact their local, state and national Foster Parent Associations for information about liability insurance and legal representation programs.

R. FOSTER PARENT RELATIONSHIP TO CCDCFS

1. Foster parents must consider themselves independent contractors and may not be considered employees or agents of any county department.
2. Foster parents are not covered by the county's workers compensation coverage and are not eligible for unemployment compensation through the county.

SEE ALSO:

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-13
Current Reimbursement Rates
CCDCFS Foster Parent Non-Travel Expense Report Form

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual

Policy 6.02.15 Reimbursement to Foster or Adoptive Caregivers for Damages