



About Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard

In the past, lengthy and complex approval processes were required before children and youth in foster care could participate in activities such as sleeping over at a friend's house or going on out-of-State trips. The approval processes made otherwise "normal" childhood and adolescent experiences atypical for children and youth in out-of-home care.

To address this issue, President Obama signed the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P. L. 113–183) into law. This Federal law includes the reasonable and prudent parent standard (RPPS), which allows foster parents and caregivers greater discretion in making decisions regarding the typical daily activities of the children and youth in their care.

The RPPS directs well-informed and appropriately trained foster parents and kinship caregivers to make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions by considering the potential risks and benefits associated with each decision. Reasonable and prudent parenting decisions should normalize a child or youth's experiences as much as possible while maintaining their health, safety, and best interests.

Helping children and youth in foster care have normal routine experiences is critically important for their healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development, overall well-being, and successful transition into adulthood.

Defining Normalcy

Normalcy means allowing children and youth in out-of-home care to experience childhood and adolescence in ways similar to their peers who are not in foster care. For young people in foster care, normalcy can be defined in various ways. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015), youth have defined "normalcy" as:

- ▶ Being part of a caring and supportive family
- ▶ Developing and cultivating friendships with peers and relationships with supportive adults
- ▶ Engaging in extracurricular and everyday activities (e.g., participating in sports and clubs, getting a driver's license, going on school trips, etc.)
- ▶ Being a person, not a label (i.e., "foster child/youth")
- ▶ Having the authority to make their own decisions, try new things, and make mistakes

Reference

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015). What young people need to thrive: Leveraging the Strengthening Families Act to promote normalcy. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/what-young-people-need-to-thrive/>

This document is part of the series, “Perspectives on Normalcy: Videos and Discussion Questions,” which can be viewed at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/foster-care-permanency/perspectives-normalcy>.

