

Important Policy Clarification: How to Select Back-Up Providers, Baby Sitters, and Sleepovers (v2)

We are attempting through this article to dispel the confusion and mixed messages given about babysitting, back-up providers, and the ability of foster parents to approve sleepovers with friends. *Please note that private agencies sometimes have their own policies that may be stricter than those at CFSA.* We recommend that if you have a question about your agency's policy, you show them the CFSA policies below and ask if they apply to the parents in your agency.

The following are key points from the CFSA policy on [Supervision and Self-Care of Foster Children](#) [Effective Date: 4-08-2013], the CFSA administrative issuance [Overnight Stays](#) [Effective Date: 2-21-2006] as well as the CFSA Quick Reference Guide, [Travel with Resource Parents and Overnight Stays](#) [Effective Date: 2-21-06]:

- 1) If a child in foster care requires a babysitter on a continual basis, the babysitter must be 16 years of age or older, and trusted by the resource parent based on experience and interactions.
- 2) For short-term occasional situations when it is necessary for the resource parent to be absent from the home, the resource parent may select a trusted individual to babysit.
- 3) Resource parents must ensure that babysitters are well informed of the following information (at a minimum):
 - Ø Any known allergies of the child
 - Ø How to manage medical and physical conditions of the child
 - Ø The emotional and behavioral needs of the child
 - Ø Age appropriate activities and any restrictions on activities
 - Ø Visible posting of emergency numbers including 911 and local numbers for the police, fire departments, poison control, foster parent's cell phone number, and other important information as determined by the resource parent and social worker
- 4) When the resource parent is away from the home on an occasional basis, substitute care may be provided by a babysitter or a substitute care provider who is not a licensed or certified provider.
- 5) Any regular or daily substitute care must be provided by a licensed day care provider, a licensed resource parent, a certified substitute care provider, or the equivalent according to the jurisdiction where the supervision will occur.
- 6) For regular or daily substitute care in the home, a discussion must take place between the social worker and the resource parent regarding the child's individual needs and development of a suitable plan for the child's care during the time the resource parent is not going to be at home.
- 7) The social worker and resource parent must produce a written plan that should include but not be limited to contact information of those who will provide substitute care, including emergency numbers.

- 8) A child 8 years of age and younger must not under any circumstance be left unattended or allowed to self-care for any period of time.
- 9) No child under the age of 16 shall care for another child without an adult in the home.
- 10) Foster parents may approve overnight slumber parties for children in their care as long as the overnight location is within 100 miles of the District of Columbia and the overnight time frame is less than 2 nights. The foster parent has authority to approve such overnights in situations that s/he assesses to be safe and appropriate.
- 11) The foster parent must still notify the child's social worker of the child's location whenever a child in care spends a night away from the foster home. If the resource parent does not reach the social worker, s/he may leave a voice mail detailing the child's location.

To read the policies in their entirety, please visit CFSA's online policy manual at <http://cfsa.dc.gov> or FAPAC's website at <http://dcfapac.org>. If you ever have any questions or concerns regarding policy, please feel free to contact the Policy Unit at cfsa.policies@dc.gov. As usual, we are grateful for all of your dedication to the children in the District's foster care system.

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