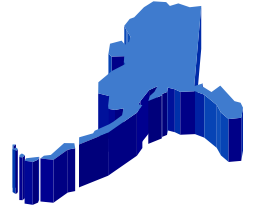




UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS:



What Alaskan Foster Parents Need to Know

1

Positive Parenting and Managing Behavior
1.0 Training Credit



Written and Produced by:
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UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS: *What Alaskan Foster Parents Need to Know*

Positive Parenting and Managing Behavior ***7 AAC 50.435***

This series was compiled with assistance from the State of Alaska Office of Children's Services to help foster parents understand the foster care regulations. This series is a guide to the regulations but is not a substitute. In all discrepancies between the information in this series and the regulations, the regulations are the final authority. Contact your licensing worker for a complete copy of the regulations.

FOSTER PARENT COMPETENCIES

This self-study module addresses part or all of the following Child Welfare League of America Competencies for Foster Caregivers:

902-4 *The foster caregiver knows agency policies regarding the treatment and discipline of children, and knows the types of parenting and child management strategies that are consistent with these rules.*

905-1 *The foster caregiver knows the state's/province's licensing rules and the mandates and expectations of foster families to remain licensed.*

914-4 *The foster caregiver understands why physical discipline is detrimental to children and youth who have been abused or neglected.*

914-5 *The foster caregiver can set clear and reasonable rules and limits that are appropriate for the age, cultural background, and developmental level of children and youth.*

914-7 *The foster caregiver knows non-physical methods of behavior management, such as positive or selective reinforcement, time out, shaping of behavior, use of natural and logical consequences, and token economy, and knows how to choose the best method considering the child or youth, and the situation.*

WHAT ARE THE REGULATIONS FOR BEING A FOSTER CAREGIVER?

Foster homes provide a safe place for children who are unable to live with their birth parents. Foster care regulations focus on factors that increase the level of safety for children. Foster parents are held to a higher standard of care than birth parents because of the need to assure safe, licensed care. The foster care regulations outline the general qualities expected in a foster parent and list specific actions that should be avoided.



The foster care regulations specify that a foster parent needs to be a responsible individual who exercises sound judgement. A foster parent should have the capacity to deal with frustration and conflict and be able to work with children who may show negative behaviors. A foster parent should be free of any physical, health or mental health problem that poses a risk to the children in their care.



Foster parents should have good skills when it comes to caring for children. Caregivers should be able to use positive guidance and set clear and consistent limits. They should act as a positive role model for children and be able to use strategies to de-escalate volatile situations. They should provide protection for a child and not expose them to high risk, hazards or dangerous situations. And they should be able to provide children with a variety of age-appropriate experiences and social opportunities. In other words, they should be capable parents and good for kids!

WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About how to treat children?



- ✓ Treat foster children equitably with your own children. Chores should be shared equally amongst children and match their ability and age.
- ✓ Any money earned by the child or given as a gift to the child is considered the child's and should not be used or borrowed by a foster home member beside the child. A foster parent may, however put limits on the amount of money a child may have in possession and should help a child establish a bank account, especially if he has money over the amount of \$200. The foster care payment is not considered property of the child.
- ✓ A foster parent should help a child get appropriate and decent clothing that is comparable to the quality and appearance of other children in the community. All personal clothing and belongings in use at the time a child leaves the foster home should go with the child.
- ✓ Have a specific space for each child to keep his own clothing and personal possessions. A foster child does not need to have his own bedroom, but each child should have his own crib or bed (with the exception that young children of the same sex may share a double bed.)



About supervision of the children in your home?

- ✓ No more than six children total may reside in a foster home, unless there is a specific variance. No more than three of these children can be foster children. During the first year of foster care experience by a foster home, no more than two children of any age who are unrelated to the foster parent may be cared for.



- ✓ When choosing child care or substitute care for your foster children, use good judgement in choosing mature, capable caregivers who you know and trust. The regulations require that if you choose to use a babysitter for a short period, that this sitter be at least 14 years old and mature enough to handle common emergencies. A short period means no more than six hours. If you leave a foster child for longer periods of time, you should choose a mature adult or an emergency caregiver. For any absences longer than 72 hours, the foster child should be left with another licensed foster care provider.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SUPERVISION...

We expect you as a foster parent to be a responsible individual who exercises sound judgement. This means when you are supervising foster children, it is important that you provide the supervision and limits to keep a child safe. Appropriate supervision of children depends on good judgement. As a foster parent, you are expected to put the safety of the child first and foremost.

This means not allowing young children to participate in high-risk activities such as walking along narrow riverbanks alone or riding bikes along busy streets without supervision. It means not allowing young children to be left unsupervised or exposed to inappropriate television or video programs or to dangerous persons. It means knowing where your teen children are and not allowing them to be unsupervised for long periods of times.



WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About the relationship between a child and his birth family?



- ✓ Foster parents need to respect the religious and cultural beliefs of the child's birth family. This may mean taking a child to a certain church even when it is not your own place of worship. This may mean taking a child to a cultural event that reflects the child's heritage. These actions show respect for a child and his family.
- ✓ It is also part of the regulations that you refrain from saying derogatory remarks about a child's family. This means you should not say anything negative or anything that puts a child's family in a bad or negative light.
- ✓ Foster parents are also expected to support the visitation schedule set up in the case plan. This may include transporting a child to a visit or allowing phone calls. Foster parents cannot restrict visits with family members as a form of punishment or consequence. All visitation and contact should be in accordance with the case plan. If a family member is abusing that privilege (such as calling too often or constantly after the child is in bed), you may need to contact the caseworker to intervene.

WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About what is not allowed in foster care?

FROM AAC 50.435 BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

No discipline or behavior management technique may be used that is cruel, humiliating or otherwise damaging to the child.

- (e) A child in care may not be:
- (1) removed from the other children for more than 10 minutes if a young child
 - (2) disciplined in association with food or rest;
 - (3) punished for bedwetting or actions in regard to toileting or toilet training
 - (4) subjected to discipline administered by another child;
 - (5) deprived of family contacts, mail clothing, medical care, therapeutic activities designated in the child's plan of care, or contact with the child's placement worker or legal representative
 - (6) subjected to verbal abuse, to derogatory remarks about the child or members of the child's family or to threats to expel the child from the foster home;
 - (7) placed in a locked room
 - (8) physically restrained, except when necessary to protect a young child from accident, protect persons on the premises from physical injury, or protect property from serious damage and then only passive physical restraint may be used; or
 - (9) mechanically restrained, except for protectiveness such as seatbelts
 - (10) chemically restrained, expect on the order of a physician
- (g) ...no form of corporal punishment may be used on children in care

A person having regular contact with children in a foster home may not abuse a child or engage in any exploitive or sexual act with a child. An adult having regular contact with children in a foster home may not have a romantic relationship with a child.



Examples of what is not allowed include:

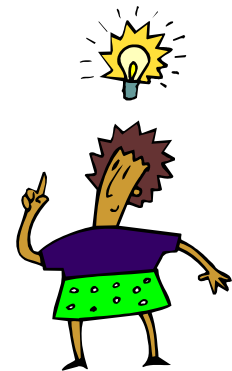
Using spanking for discipline is not allowed. Do not spank, slap, hit, pinch, pull hair, grab ears, or intentionally cause physical pain to a child. Do not make him stand in a corner with his arms up. Do not place a child in a closet or dark room as a punishment. Restrain a child only if he is hurting himself, hurting another person or damaging property.

Do not threaten to kick a child out of the home in order to get him to do something. Do not threaten to take away a visit with his parent or keep him from a counseling session as a punishment. Do not use food as a punishment (such as sending the child to bed without supper if he wants to eat or force him to eat uneaten food from the day before). Do not use discipline that causes humiliation or fear to a child. Do not hang soiled sheets out for everyone to see if the child wets his bed.

RESOURCE PAPER:

Ideas For Discipline And Guidance

Positive parenting and *managing behavior* are words to describe how we teach children how to act and how not to act. There are many ways to teach a child. The practices not allowed in foster care are practices that can hurt foster children more than they help. What is allowed in foster care? Plenty! Following are 15 things foster parents can use to teach good behavior. You probably know many more.



1. **Modeling:** Spend time with your foster children. Get to know them. Let them get to know you. Show them the way you want them to act by acting that way yourself.
2. **Lay out some simple rules:** Talk about how you do things in your family. Remember that your foster child comes from a different family with different rules. Keep your rules simple "It is not okay to hit anyone. It's not okay to destroy property or things. It's not okay to hurt yourself." If you have any special ways of doing things in your home, take some time to explain this to the child.
3. **Distracting--Re-Directing:** For young children, putting away a hurtful object or ignoring some behavior can work if you can distract a child's attention. In other words, move attention away from the problem. With older children, this means not getting into a power struggle. Change the subject, distract the child with another activity, or ask a question that moves the child in another direction.

4. ***Provide a variety of positive experiences:*** We may not always think of this as *discipline*. But if a child has a chance to build a skill, have fun, make choices, and have success in one area of his life (such as in sports, or arts or music or crafts) he often can be more successful in other parts of his life. Besides, busy children are also not as likely to do something you'd rather they not do!
5. ***Structure and Routines:*** Children do best when they can predict what is going to happen. Have regular mealtimes, bedtimes, chores, and expectations about what happens after school.
6. ***Consequences:*** Consequences means a child takes responsibility for he does. Consequences teach children that they need to accept how their actions affect others. **EXAMPLES:** *If you do not take care of your bike or toys, you lose the privilege to play with them. If you steal, you must replace the object.*
7. ***Time-outs:*** Taking a time-out is a good way to help children get back into control. Send the child to sit quietly at the table or sit in a certain chair. One minute of time-out for each year of age is a good guide. Use a timer to help you remember. Keep it short-- just enough to get the child --- or you --- back into control.
8. ***Contracts:*** For specific chores or rules, put it in writing. Let your child help. **EXAMPLE:** “*If I, Johnny, do not swear in the house for one week, Mom will let me go to the school dance next Friday.*” Both sign. Check back in during the week to see how it is going.
9. ***Family Meetings:*** Family meetings are a regular time to get together and talk about how things are going. At your family meeting, discuss solutions to problems and give recognition for things that are going well. Get the children involved with what is discussed at the meetings. Always end with something fun (a ride, ice cream or a video) so that family meetings are seen as an enjoyable time.
10. ***Good Communication:*** Talk to children about their behavior. Give them specific information about what you expect. Being clear helps them know what you want. Include lots of *positives* in your talk. Give praise and let your children know how you feel when they do well.
11. ***Restitution:*** Restitution can be used as a consequence. If a child breaks something or causes someone undue hardship, help the child make up for it by earning money to replace an item or paying for it out of his allowance.
12. ***Problem Solving:*** If something is an ongoing problem, sit down and work out a solution together when you are both calm. Come up with several ideas together, decide on one you both agree on, and agree on how to use the solution. Doing it when you're calm and working it out together means it is more likely to work. It also teaches children the valuable skill of solving problems without hitting.

13. ***Taking away privileges:*** If you take away a privilege, draw a clear connection between the child's action and the loss of the privilege (EXCEPTIONS: *Do not deprive a child of food, sleep, visits, family contacts and counseling.*)
14. ***Earning privileges:*** A child can earn back privileges or can earn special privileges (extra hour of TV watching, a trip to the video store, etc.) Try not to present the earning of a privilege as a bribe, but in a way the child learns that good behavior has its rewards.
15. ***Getting Help:*** Sometimes you have tried *everything* and could use some help! Try talking with another foster parent. Call the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center for more ideas. The child's caseworker may have insight into an issue. A child's counselor may be helpful.

For more information about the **UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS: *What Alaskan Foster Parents Need to Know*** series, contact the Alaskan Foster Parent Training Center at 1-800-478-7307. In Fairbanks/North Pole, call 479-7307.