

## Foster Care Fact Sheet

Becoming a foster caregiver is a rewarding journey, but it can come with challenges, such as figuring out the rules and regulations. This Fact Sheet answers basic questions faced by many foster caregivers.

### General

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#### 1. I just received a child into my home. How do I get his/her Medicaid provider?

The caseworker should either have the child's insurance card or obtain the Medicaid number for you. Medicaid providers are able to access a child's Medicaid numbers from their billing system.

- If you don't know the child's primary care physician, and he/she is enrolled in Healthy Blue, you find the doctor by emailing their Case Management team at [la1casemgmt@healthyblue.com](mailto:la1casemgmt@healthyblue.com).
- Medicaid providers are listed by specialty and parish at [https://www.lamedicaid.com/apps/provider\\_demographics/provider\\_map.aspx](https://www.lamedicaid.com/apps/provider_demographics/provider_map.aspx)

If there are any issues with locating a Medicaid provider for the child, ask your caseworker for assistance. You can also discuss with your caseworker the ability for DCFS to pay or reimburse you for required services or medication should you not be able to find a specialist who takes Medicaid.

#### 2. How and when do we receive notices for court hearings and Family Team Meetings?

Caseworkers are required to notify foster caregivers of court hearings and Family Team Meetings at least 20 days in advance. Foster Caregivers are encouraged to complete the [Foster Caregiver Progress Report Form](#) and provide it to the caseworker, who will then submit the form to the court 10 days prior to the respective court hearing. Completing this form gives you an opportunity to share information directly with the courts regarding the child in your care. The form and the link to submit it online are located at <https://www.dcfsla.gov/page/foster-parenting>.

#### 3. What do I do when a child needs to stay overnight with someone or travel out of state with us?

DCFS expects all children in foster care to be treated as members of your caring and supportive family. Children in foster care can participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities and experiences, just like their peers. This includes overnight stays (with friends and other people approved by you) and vacation trips.



Before traveling out of state or internationally with a child in foster care, you must get approval from DCFS to ensure the child's team is informed of your travel plans and how to contact you in case of an emergency.

When a child wants to stay overnight with someone important to him – such as school friends, relatives approved by DCFS or your family members – you, as the person providing daily care of the child, may approve the overnight stay. During your monthly home visits with your caseworker, be sure to give your caseworker a list of everyone that you have approved the child to stay overnight with. The caseworker can also provide you a list of approved family members the child can visit. See [Policy 6-935: Travel and the Foster Child](#).

**4. If a child in my home tells me about abuse or neglect that previously happened to him/her, what should I do?**

As a mandated reporter, if a child discloses details about being abused or neglected, you are required to report this to our Child Protection hotline, 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437), as well as to the child's assigned caseworker. For more information about reporting requirements, see our brochure at [https://www.dcf.la.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Child%20Welfare/DCFS\\_June2019\\_MandatedReporterBrochure.pdf](https://www.dcf.la.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Child%20Welfare/DCFS_June2019_MandatedReporterBrochure.pdf)

## Supplies and Reimbursements

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**5. When a child arrives in my home, what are some of the items he/she may need?**

Foster caregivers are encouraged to keep essential toiletries and clothing items available for the age/sex of children they are willing to accept in their home. This is particularly helpful when a child comes to live in your home after an emergency occurs in the middle of the night.

In most cases, the caseworker will bring important personal belongings with the child, and it is vital for the child to keep those things close.

DCFS will purchase or reimburse you for most essential items for the child. It is important to communicate with the caseworker to ensure they are aware of the needs of the child and purchases you make are approved in advance.

**6. Can DCFS provide me with a car seat for a child living in my home?**

Yes, check with your caseworker! The local Child Welfare office may have new car seats available. If one is not available, you can either buy one and request reimbursement or ask the caseworker to purchase a car seat. This includes when a child outgrows a car seat initially purchased.

The maximum amount of reimbursement allowed for an infant or toddler car seat is \$150, and \$50 for a booster seat. The link to Louisiana law regarding child safety seats can be found in DCFS Policy at [https://public.powerdms.com/LADCFS/tree/documents/402986.Child Passenger Safety 101 virtual training is encouraged and offered to all foster caregivers transporting children](https://public.powerdms.com/LADCFS/tree/documents/402986.Child%20Passenger%20Safety%20101.virtual%20training%20is%20encouraged%20and%20offered%20to%20all%20foster%20caregivers%20transporting%20children). The virtual course can found at this link: <https://moodle.lcwta.org/course/view.php?id=259>

## 7. As a foster caregiver, what can I be reimbursed for when the expense is NOT directly related to a child living in my home?

There are a few reimbursable expenses to assist in becoming a certified foster caregiver, and/or in maintaining foster caregiver certification. Some of these include:

- **Babysitting fees**
  - Generally, reimbursement for babysitting is allowed while attending foster caregiver training. Prospective foster caregivers may be reimbursed at a maximum rate of
    - \$10 per hour for one child and
    - \$15 per hour for more than one child,
    - Not to exceed \$200 per year for pre-service training.
  - Once certified, foster caregivers may be reimbursed babysitting not to exceed \$125 per year while attending required in-service training.
  - Ask your Home Development caseworker for more details. You may also review DCFS Policy at <https://powerdms.com/link/LADCFS/document/?id=405177>.
- Swimming pool alarms are reimbursed at \$40 once a child in foster care is living in the home.
- For in-person certification training and ongoing training requirements, mileage reimbursement is currently \$0.70 per mile.
- For web-based training, reimbursement to certified foster caregivers is available up to \$4 per training topic, for a maximum of \$60 per year. A copy of the training certificate is required for reimbursement.

## 8. As a foster caregiver, what can I be reimbursed for when the expense IS directly related to a child living in my home?

There are times when some items or services are paid for directly by DCFS, and other times when the foster caregiver can be reimbursed. All purchases are based on the child's individual needs.

Always talk to your caseworker before making a purchase to ensure the item or service is reimbursable. Below are some of the most frequently requested reimbursable expenses:

- **Clothing**
  - Within the first 30 days a child enters foster care, or when seasons change, clothing is reimbursable up to \$300 (*children under 12*) or up to \$400 (*ages 12 and older*).
  - For children up to age 2, this can include items such as formula, diapers, diaper bags, etc.
  - Replacement clothing can be reimbursed up to \$200 per year (*children under 12*) and up to \$300 (*ages 12 and older*).
- **Toiletries** – within the first 30 days a child enters a foster home, items such as deodorant, shaving cream, toothbrush, sanitary napkins, etc. are reimbursable up to \$40.
- **Luggage** – up to \$100 for a one-time expense to purchase new luggage.
- **Mileage** – based on the current state rate of \$0.70 per mile, is reimbursable for the following:
  - Taking a child to and from a family visit
  - Attending DCFS meetings or court hearings on behalf of or with the child
  - Transporting the child to and from an appointment (medical, dental and counseling)
- **Prescribed Medications and Vitamins** – prescriptions are covered by Medicaid; vitamins must be recommended by the child's doctor and are reimbursable.

- **Hair Care** – up to \$400 per year for haircuts, hair styling/products and treatments approved by the child’s parents.
- **School Fees** – Act 240, passed by the Louisiana Legislature in 2019, allows foster caregivers to request an economic hardship waiver to exempt children in their care from paying school fees.
- **School Computer** – Foster caregivers are encouraged to pay the technology fee for the child’s school computer if it is not waived. Reimbursement is up to \$20 per school year.
- **School Supplies** – up to \$75 per school year.
- **School Uniforms** – up to \$150 for a child in Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and \$250 for a child in middle and high school.
- **Backpack** – \$50 per school year.
- The following educational expenses are reimbursable:
  - **Tutoring** – please contact the school to discuss the educational concerns; explore their assessment and offerings for tutoring services. If there are no offerings, request a written recommendation that can be used in private tutoring services.
  - **Band instruments** – purchase or rental not to exceed \$400 per school year. All rented instruments shall be returned at the end of each school year.
  - **Clothing for special events or athletics** (*PE uniform, team or athletic gear*) – not to exceed \$500 per school year
  - **Special school events** – up to \$300 per event (*maximum of two events per school year*) for the purchase or rental of formal gowns, tuxedos, etc.
  - **Prom tickets** – up to \$50 for high school juniors or seniors; only the child’s ticket can be purchased, not his/her date.
  - **Senior expenses** – not to exceed \$200 for senior pictures and \$500 for senior ring and/or senior graduation packages.
  - **School pictures/yearbooks** – up to \$50 twice per school year.
- **Recreational activities**, including sponsored school field trips, scout memberships, self-improvement or skill-based classes – up to \$900 per school year (*up to \$300 for summer camps and \$600 for socialization activities*)

## 9. How do I get reimbursed for expenses?

The current process is to submit a Form 435, along with itemized receipts for purchases. We encourage you to make a copy of all forms and receipts for your records before submitting to your caseworker.

Itemize and sign the receipts. You can email them to your caseworker and provide the originals during your monthly home visit. If you do not receive reimbursement within 30 days of submission, contact your caseworker. The Form 435 can be found at <https://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/OCS/fosterParenting/435form.pdf>

## 10. What is a Special Board Rate?

A regular board rate is a reimbursement of the child’s daily needs that include shelter, food, clothing, allowances, and incidental expenses. A special board rate may be considered when the care and supervision needed for the child is beyond what is normally expected for a child of his or her developmental age.

You can request an assessment for a special board rate at any time through the child's caseworker. DCFS Policy provides a guide for staff in assessing special board rates, which can be found at <https://powerdms.com/link/LADCFS/document/?id=402770>.

## Babysitting, Day Care, School, and Respite Care

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### 11. Can a family member or friend babysit a child in my care?

Yes. Foster caregivers can have relatives, friends, and other foster caregivers provide assistance, including temporary supervision needs such as babysitting and back-up childcare. For children under age 13, the babysitters must be at least 15 years old. For children older than age 13, the babysitters must be at least 21 years old. Babysitting is not a reimbursable expense.

The person providing childcare should provide a safe environment, adequate care, and supervision for the child. Additionally, they must follow DCFS' policy regarding discipline, which prohibits the use of physical punishment or any type of punishment that inflicts emotional or physical harm.

For more details, refer to [Policy 6-925: Babysitting and Supervision of Children in Need of Placement or Other Special Circumstance](#).

### 12. How do I enroll a child in daycare?

Daycare is available for all children under the age of 13. Type III and Type M daycares that are licensed by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) can be used. Visit <https://louisianaschools.com/> to find a daycare near you that accepts CCAP and learn more about the different types of centers available. You can also use one of the [Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) to help you find a daycare facility.

Once a center is located, let your caseworker know, and he/she will complete the required forms for enrollment. Not all daycare facilities are willing to accept children receiving state assistance. When arrangements have been finalized by DCFS, you can start bringing your child to the daycare center.

If a child is less than six weeks old, or there are no current openings at a Type III or M daycare facility and you are on a waiting list, you can request that the child attend a licensed, home-based day care provider. Your caseworker must obtain approval from State Office for this service.

### 13. What services and supports are available to help with school registrations and transfers?

DCFS and LDOE work together to make sure children are enrolled in school as quickly as possible. It is preferable for a child to remain in the school they were attending, providing as much continuity as possible.

A school cannot deny admission of a child due to missing documentation. The school will require the initial placement agreement (Form 98A) or the School 1 Form provided by the caseworker. You can review more in LDOE's, "[Foster Care Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Acts](#)."

#### **14. What is Respite Care, and how can I get it?**

Respite is the temporary care of a child by another foster caregiver to provide relief and support. All foster caregivers can receive up to 7 days of overnight respite care per child with approval by the caseworker. Additional respite days can be approved at the manager level. Once the respite is approved, the foster caregivers providing the respite services are reimbursed at \$25 per night or \$50 per night for a child with special needs. See [Policy 6-920: Respite and Alternative Child Care Plans](#).

### **More Information**

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We hope this Foster Care Fact Sheet will be a resource for you in your foster caregiver journey. You can view DCFS' Child Welfare policies at <https://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/page/511>. If you still have questions, please do not hesitate to ask your caseworker or email us at [DCFS.Fostercare@la.gov](mailto:DCFS.Fostercare@la.gov).