

REASONABLE AND PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD

Promoting Normalcy for Children in Out-of-Home Care



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

A Resource of Caregivers/Out-of-Home Care Providers

The **Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS)** is a standard of decision making that allows an out-of-home care provider to make certain parenting decisions for children placed in their care. This applies to:

- Licensed foster parents
- Guardians
- Court-ordered kinship care providers
- Unlicensed relatives
- Unlicensed non-relatives
- Group homes
- Residential care centers
- Shelter care facilities

This standard does not apply to respite care service providers or voluntary kinship care providers.

The out-of-home care provider makes RPPS decisions for children who are placed in their care when determining participation in age and developmentally appropriate activities that encourage normalcy and emotional and developmental growth, while still maintaining the health, safety, best interest, and cultural, religious, and tribal values of child.

Normalcy is the ability to have experiential opportunities for normal growth and development that promotes well-being. Every child has a right to normalcy, and personal growth should not be hindered by a child's placement in out-of-home care.

Purpose

To create and promote normalcy:

- Allows children to participate in normal activities without agency barriers.

To build relationships:

- Promotes trust and understanding between the caregiver and the child.
- Improves relationships between children and their peers.

To promote personal growth and improve well-being:

- Helps children build and develop skills to promote a successful transition to adulthood.
- Allows children to explore and try different interests and activities.
- Encourages children to be involved in their own planning.

Considerations

When decisions using reasonable and prudent parenting, a caregiver will consider a combination of factors in relation to the child and the specific situation.

Factors include, but are not limited to:

- Child's wishes
- Age, Maturity, Development
- Potential Risk Factors
- Best Interests of the Child
- Opportunity for Growth
- Family-like Life Experience
- Child's Behavioral History
- Court/Legal Considerations
- Cultural, Religious, and Tribal Considerations
- Parent and guardian values

The child must have any necessary training for participation in that activity must be completed, and safety equipment must be provided.

Involving a Child's Parent

- When possible and appropriate, caregivers should take a parent/guardian's wishes into consideration.
- The parent/guardian has valuable insight about the child that help in decision making and allows the parent/guardian to remain as an active part of the child's life.
- Parent/guardian input is encouraged, but not required to make parenting decisions.

Support When Applying RPPS

Out-of-home care providers are required to receive training on reasonable and prudent parenting in order to make decisions for a child placed in their care. The child's child welfare professional or your licensor will provide you with information about how to access this training.

When a child is placed, the child welfare professional will explain the child-specific information that should be considered when making decisions for the child. The child welfare professional will gather input from the child and the child's parent/guardian when it is possible and appropriate prior to placement.

Information is provided to caregivers in the following ways:

- Information to Out-of-Home Care Providers Part A DCF-F-CFS-0872A
- Information to Out-of-Home Care Providers Part B DCF-F-CFS0872B
- Verbal and written updates throughout the child's placement and through child and family team meetings

If a caregiver feels they do not have enough information about the child to make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision, they should contact the child's child welfare professional and/or foster care licensor, if applicable, for additional information about the child. The agency child welfare professional will support a caregiver in decision making and how to apply reasonable and prudent parenting.

What's Excluded

Reasonable and prudent parenting decisions may not violate court orders, other laws, administrative rules, or other services that are part of the child's permanency plan, including but not limited to:

- Court-ordered family interaction
- Medical approvals/Other medical laws
- Medication authorizations or approvals
- Confidentiality laws
- Educational-related decisions based on statute

If you are unsure if your decision conflicts with any of the above, contact the child's child welfare professional and/or your foster care licensor, if applicable.

Will I be liable for my decisions?

The fear of liability should not prevent you from applying reasonable and prudent parenting. State statute limits liability under s. 895.485 Wis. Stats. when the decision was reasonable and prudent.

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.