

Caring for Foster Children Who Else Can Provide Care?

Sometimes children need a break from their daily routine. Activities, time with their birth family, and friends can build a child's self-esteem and reduce the stress of separation from their birth family. It's important for you, as a foster parent, to take a break too! Breaks can provide time to recharge, regroup, and refocus which all help prevent burnout.

Foster parents can exercise the reasonable and prudent parent standard to identify an informal care provider for up to seven consecutive days of care. If a child will be with another caregiver for seven to 13 days, that caregiver must be approved through the agency. In both instances, foster parents can select other individuals who they know, trust, and believe will provide a safe place for their foster children. Foster parents may also access formal respite caregivers that are approved foster homes.



Below is a chart comparing requirements between informal and formal respite care providers. As a reminder, please keep your child's worker informed of the child's whereabouts when utilizing other caregivers.

| | Informal Care | Alternate Caregiver | Respite Care Provider |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Time limit | Less than eight days* | Less than fourteen days | Less than fourteen days |
| Reasons for use | Date night, before or after school care, weekends away, etc. | Unexpected emergencies, out-of-state family events, etc. | Short-term break |
| Age requirement | 18 years old* | 21 years old | 21 years old |
| Background check required | No – foster parent discretion | Yes | Yes |
| House assessment completed by DHS/Agency | No | Yes | Yes |
| Provider approved by DHS/agency for care | No | Yes – specific requirements are met | Yes – fully approved foster family |
| Approval needed by DHS/agency prior to use | DHS homes – No Agency homes – Yes* | No | Yes |
| Reimbursement | Foster parent discretion or vouchers, if available (for DHS families only)* | Foster parent discretion or vouchers, if available (for DHS families only)* | Refer to agency for details |
| Existing relationship with foster family | Yes | Yes | Not required |
| Examples of providers | Friends, church members, neighbors, relatives | Friends, church members, neighbors, relatives | Fully approved foster family |

*** Refer to agency for additional details.**