

“Know” before you say “No”

To “know” means knowing policy and it especially means knowing the child’s needs and maturity level, this document is intended to clarify existing myths relating to normal life activities for children and youth in care. The rule citations in this document are taken from the Washington Administrative Code title 388 or Children’s Administration Policy.

Myth: Children/youth in foster care may not spend the night with friends or in unlicensed settings.

Fact: The caregiver may give permission for the child/youth to spend the night away from the caregiver’s home up to 72 hours without approval from CA.

RCW 74.13.710

Myth: Children/youth cannot travel with foster families out of their county or state.

Fact: Children/youth may travel with caregivers’ within the United States less than 72 hours without approval from CA. Travel to British Columbia (BC) territories of BC Rockies, Thompson/Okanogan and Vancouver Coast and Mountains are considered ‘border counties’ to Washington State and do not require out of country approval if the travel is less than 72 hours. All territories beyond are considered out of country travel and require CA approval.

WAC 388-148-1435

Myth: Children/youth in foster care (including group care) may not attend church or events on their own.

Fact: The child/youth has the right to attend church services, temple, mosque, or synagogue, of their choice. Caregivers must respect the religious backgrounds or preferences of the children under their care. Children and youth have the right not to practice the caregiver’s faith without consequences.

WAC 388-148-1520 (7) and (8)

Myth: Children/youth in care cannot have privacy.

Fact: Children/youth in care have the right to privacy of personal mail and phone unless specified by a court order for the child’s safety or well-being.

WAC 388-148-1540

Myth: Children/youth cannot take personal belongings when they move.

Fact: Children/youth must be permitted to take personal belongings they brought with them or acquired while in care with them when discharged (moved).

If it is impossible for the child/youth to take their belongings at the time they leave, the caregiver is required to secure the child’s belongings for up to 30 days and cooperate with the child’s DCFS worker to transfer the belongings to the child/youth, as soon as possible.

WAC 388-148-1545

Myth: Children/youth may not participate in extra-curricular activities.

Fact: The caregiver may give approval for the child/youth to participate in routine activities without a licensed provider supervising the activity, such as clubs, social outings with classmates or friends.

You do not need DCFS worker approval for your foster child's participation in routine activities without a licensed provider supervising the activity, such as clubs, social outings with classmates or friends. You may approve normal childhood activities using a reasonable and prudent parenting standard. Overnight stays over seventy-two hours requires DCFS worker approval. Any activities requiring travel must comply with WAC 388-148-1435.

WAC 388-148-1435

Myth: Caregivers can deny children/youth from having contact with parents and siblings as a form of discipline.

Fact: Foster parents must support the permanent placement plan for the child, focusing first on the birth family reuniting, and then, on options leading to a permanent placement.

Parent/child visits are the right of the family when visits are in the best interest of the child. Parent/Child visits can only be limited or terminated when the child's, safety, health and welfare is compromised. The court must approve all changes to a visit plan if the child is dependent

Sibling contact is crucial for maintaining sibling relationships and supports their well-being while in care. The Department cannot limit visits or contacts between siblings as a sanction for a child's behavior or as an incentive to change a child's behavior.

WAC 388-148-1530; Practices and Procedures Guide: 4254 Parent/Child, and Sibling Visits

Myth: Once placed in foster care children/youth may lose contact with their support system making them feel alone and isolated.

Fact: Caregivers must connect a child with resources that meets a child's needs. Caregivers must be able to meet the child's/youth's basic needs regarding race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity. These include cultural, educational, and spiritual activities.

Caregivers must furnish children with a nurturing, respectful, and supportive environment. Caregivers can also choose activities that are appropriate for foster children, but these activities must be appropriately supervised and may not interfere with visitation with the child's parents.

WAC 388-148-1365 (2b)

WAC 388-148-1520 (7)

WAC 388-148-1530