

2020 Foster Care Redesign Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Glossary of Terms



Babysitting – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) Foster parents may arrange for occasional short-term care of their foster child or youth on occasions when a foster parent needs to be away from the home for less than 24-hours consecutively. For example, when a foster parent has a medical appointment, needs to go grocery shopping, or attend an occasional social gathering, a foster parent may utilize a babysitter. Foster parents are expected to use a reasonable and prudent parent standard in determining and selecting appropriate babysitters for occasional short-term use.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (or, "CANS") – (See *Level of Need FAQ*) A CANS assessment is a multi-purpose tool developed for children's services. Versions of the CANS are currently used in all 50 states in not only child welfare, but also, mental health, juvenile justice, and early intervention applications. The tool is used to support decision making. It helps to identify the level of care and service planning a child or youth might need.

Child care – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) Generally, "child care" is defined as routine care provided for a child or youth when a foster parent is at work. Working foster families qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) facilitated by the RI Department of Human Services (DHS). The CCAP program subsidizes the cost of childcare for Rhode Island foster families caring for children and youth under the age of 13.

DCYF Primary Caseworker – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) This term refers to social workers in the Family Service Units (FSU) and Juvenile Probation divisions at DCYF. They are responsible for overall case management and service planning with families, children and youth with whom they work.

Emergency Clothing Voucher – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) When children and youth are not safe at home, they sometimes enter foster care without advance notice. This means they may arrive at their foster home without any belongings or clothing when there is an emergency. The child's DCYF primary caseworker can issue an Emergency Clothing Voucher so the foster family can purchase clothing for the child or youth immediately without waiting for the monthly foster board maintenance payment.

Foster Care Maintenance Payment – (see *Rates FAQ*) Sometimes also referred to as a "foster board rate," this term references the daily rate the Department issues a foster family in accordance with the Level of Need of the child they are caring for in their home. Payments are issued on the 15th of each month for all the days a child or youth was in care the previous month. For example, a payment issued on September 15th would include payment for all days a child or youth was in care the month of August. Payment is intended to support the cost of providing basic needs for the child or youth in care (food, clothing, etc.).

Grandfathering – (see *Rates FAQ*) A grandfather policy is sometimes also referred to as "grandfathering." A grandfather policy is a provision in policy that means the old rules continue to apply to already existing circumstances while the new rule will apply to all future cases. Those exempt from the new rule are said to have been "grandfathered in."

The Department of Children, Youth & Families is grandfathering foster board maintenance payments for families who are currently caring for a child in their home (prior to August 1, 2020). This means the rate a family is currently receiving will not change – unless the Level of Need Tier Score indicates the family could receive a *higher* rate under the new rate structure. Then, the family would see an increase. But, no one will receive a lower daily rate for a child currently in their care.

Kinship foster family – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) Relatives (e.g. grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins) are the first desirable option to provide a safe and caring environment for children and youth who enter foster care. Children and youth do better when they can live with and be supported by their relatives – or “kin” – when they are not safe at home.

Sometimes, a kinship foster family is not related to the child. A neighbor, family friend, teacher, coach or other adult familiar with the child and their family may be willing to provide a safe and caring home for a child or youth. These foster families are often also referred to as kinship foster families, or sometimes, “fictive kinship foster families.”

The Level of Need (or, “LON”) – (See *Level of Need FAQ*) An assessment tool The Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) uses for all children and youth requiring out-of-home care. The goal of the LON assessment is to clearly identify what each child’s needs are, what type of homes would be a best fit for their needs, and what services might be needed for that child. The LON assessment tool is the cornerstone of the foster care system.

Level of Need Tier Score (or, “Tier Score”) – (See *Level of Need FAQ*) The Tier Score is determined by the LON assessment tool. The LON identifies the intensity of services needed and determines the rate that will be reimbursed to a private foster care agency and the agency’s or Department’s foster home on behalf of a child initially placed with them in out-of-home care.

There is a five-tiered foster care structure, with the LON assessment indicating a Tier 1 through Tier 5 score, commensurate with the child’s needs through this assessment. A Tier 1 score is meant to identify children and youth with lower needs, a Tier 5 is meant to identify children and youth with higher needs.

Placement – (see *Placement FAQ*) The term “placement” is used to refer to where a child resides when they cannot live safely at home with their parent or guardian. The placement of a child can be a traditional or kinship foster home, a PFCA foster family, or a congregate care facility.

Placement Episode – (see *Placement FAQ*) A placement episode is defined as the end of one placement and the start of another.

Private Foster Care Agency (PFCA) foster family – (see *Placement FAQ*) “PFCA families” are foster homes supported by a private agency whom DCYF has a contract to ensure children and youth are placed in settings appropriate for their level of need.

Prudent parenting – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) This term often refers to the “Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.” It means careful and sensible parenting decisions intended to maintain the child’s health, safety, and well-being. The prudent parent standard exists to allow for reasonable parenting decisions to be made by the out-of-home caregiver (e.g. foster parent). The goal of prudent parenting is to provide a child or youth with a “normal” life experience while in foster care.

Respite – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) Respite is traditionally defined as when one foster family cares for another family’s foster children. It gives the children’s original foster family a bit of a break (or respite) – which all parents need.

Resource family – (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) This term is inclusive and often used when referring to *all* types of foster families. Traditional foster families, Private Foster Care Agency foster families, and kinship

caregivers are all critical partners for the child welfare system because they provide care for children who cannot live safely at home.

Traditional foster family - (see *Services and Supports FAQ*) "Traditional foster families" are most commonly supported by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). DCYF foster families are usually individuals who did not know the child or youth they provide care for before they came to their home. They are members of the community who volunteer to meet the foster care licensing requirements outlined by their state and complete training. Once approved, traditional foster families will provide care and support for children and youth until a permanent plan is implemented. They should be committed to working in partnership with biological family members and child welfare professionals, as well as, completing any ongoing training requirements.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/be-an-anchor/>



Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families

101 Friendship Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 528-3500