

2020 Foster Care Redesign Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Placement



Overview:

Since 2016, The Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) has been working to improve its foster care system. The Department's vision for Rhode Island's family-based foster care system includes a robust, diverse, and culturally appropriate array of services and foster families who can care for children and youth when they are not safe at home.

The DCYF has successfully renegotiated contracts with all its private foster care agencies. The core of renegotiation ensures all foster families will have access to the same level of services and supports, based on the needs of the child(ren) or youth in their care, so *all* foster families can be successful.

New private agency contracts began August 1, 2020.

Placement:

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 or a congregate care facility.

Questions in this FAQ are related to when the decision is made for a child to reside with a foster family – or "placed" with a foster family.

When will foster families know the Level of Need (LON) Tier Score for the child(ren) or youth currently in care (placed in foster care before August 1, 2020)?

Level of Need (LON) assessments have already been completed for every child and youth in the care of DCYF before August 1, 2020.

If foster families have not already been notified, foster families with Private Foster Care Agencies (PFCA) can request this information from their agency and foster families with the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) can request this information from their primary caseworker.

Will foster families know why the child(ren) and youth in our home were assigned the Tier Score they received?

Yes, when reviewing the Tier Score with either your PFCA or your DCYF primary caseworker, the LON assessment(s) will also be reviewed with the foster family. The goal is for foster families to be knowledgeable about the child(ren) and youth in their care so they can be successful in accessing services to support their needs.

Will we know the Tier Score and foster board maintenance rate for the child(ren) or youth when they come to our home?

Yes, PFCA foster families will be given that information by their agency.

DCYF foster families, the DCYF Foster Care Placement Unit will provide this information when you are contacted about a child(ren) or youth who may be good match for your home.

When there is an emergency and a child(ren) or youth is placed in foster care quickly, for example in the middle of the night, will foster families know the Tier Score then?

There are times when emergencies arise, and we will need to place children in care immediately because they are not safe at home. The DCYF primary caseworker assigned to the child(ren) or youth will complete a LON assessment with the information available at that time.

Within the first 30 days a child is in a foster home, if the foster family feels the initial LON assessment does not adequately reflect the child's needs, they may request a redetermination of the LON Tier Score.

Can a Tier Score change while a child(ren) or youth is in foster care?

Yes! In fact, when child(ren) and youth come into care at a higher Tier Score it is hopeful their Tier Score will be reduced as a result of being in a stable placement and receiving the services and supports they need.

If this happens, a foster family's rate will *not* decrease because the Tier Score decreased. Foster families will continue to receive the original, higher foster board rate associated with the initial LON assessment.

Additionally, because it is expected needs could change over time, the LON assessment and Tier Score are reviewed regularly.

How will placements be assigned? Who will be contacting me – DCYF or my agency?

This will stay the same.

PFCA foster families will continue to receive placement requests from their agency. And, DCYF foster families will continue to be contacted by the Foster Care Placement Unit with placement requests.

Will agencies be assigning placements for LON Tier Scores 3-5 only? And, DCYF LON Tier Scores 1-2 only?

No. Currently, there is a range of LON Tier Score placements in both PFCA and DCYF foster homes.

In the future, the Department anticipates agencies may have more LON Tier Score 3-5 placement requests because of the additional clinical and supportive services they can offer.

What is the anticipated distribution of tiers?

As of August 2020, the distribution of all foster care placements (PFCA and DCYF) is:
Tier 1 (51%); Tier 2 (22%); Tier 3 (18%); Tier 4 (5%); and Tier 5 (4%).

In the future, it is anticipated more children and youth will be in Tier 3 or Tier 4 placements. This is because DCYF is working to reduce its use of congregate care and place more children with foster families. Every child deserves the opportunity to live with a family.

If I am a PFCA foster family, but I would like to continue receiving placements requests for children and youth with a lower LON Tier Score *only*, should I switch to DCYF?

Speak with your agency. If your desire is to care for children with a lower LON, speak with them first to determine whether this is feasible before requesting a transition.

I am a PFCA foster family. Will I only receive placement requests for children with higher Tier Scores? What if I would like to request lower Tier Scores now and then? How do we make our preferences known? Will we be "skipped?"

Speak with your agency. It is important you review your placement preferences and/or any concerns you may have with them first.

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