

2020 Foster Care Redesign Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Services and Supports



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.

Services and Supports:

As part of this foster care redesign, foster families should experience minimal changes regarding the services and supports they receive. Foster families with Private Foster Care Agencies (PFCA's) will continue to be supported by their agency. And, DCYF will continue to support its traditional and kinship foster families.

In the future, the Department anticipates PFCA's may support more children and youth with a LON Tier Score 3-5. This is because PFCA's can offer additional clinical and supportive services. Then, the Department would support mostly lower LON Tier Score 1-2 placements and most kinship foster families.

Right now, there is a range of LON Tier Score placements in both PFCA and DCYF foster homes.

Questions in this FAQ are related to services and supports foster families receive from DCYF and/or PFCA's.

What kinds of services are available to children, youth and families at each tier?

While a tier score may indicate the *Level* of Need, each child has individual experiences and needs that will be used to determine what supports and services will be most effective. Services and supports include but are not limited to outpatient services (such as individual therapy) and community-based support (which refers to in home services from the DCYF service array or your Private Foster Care Agency).

What is the difference between Tier Score 1 and Tier Score 2 if the rates are the same?

A Tier Score 1 identifies a child or youth whose Level of Need assessment doesn't indicate a level of care required beyond the needs of a typically developing child of their age. A Level of Need assessment is often referred to as "LON."

A Tier Score 2 indicates the LON assessment identified some mild needs above a Tier Score 1. However, it is not anticipated these needs would demand a level care intensely beyond the needs of a typically developing child of their age. But this tier score is used to identify needs that should be actively monitored for changes.

How was clinical time for children and youth determined? Will it be the same for all agencies and/or tiers?

The Department used Medicaid standards to inform the minimum clinical delivery times that both Private Foster Care Agencies (PFCA) and DCYF will be expected to deliver.

Will assessments affect the frequency of caseworker visits? Who will be doing our visits?

The DCYF caseworker is required to meet face-to-face with every child on their caseload at least once per month. More frequent visits are sometimes necessary when a case requires. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some adjustments were made to allow virtual visits. All foster families who are receiving clinical services from DCYF's Service Array should expect caseworkers to be in more frequent contact with children and youth in accordance with their Level of Need.

What should foster families do when there are not enough services? Or, waiting lists are too long? Or, services are too far?

All foster families are a critical member of the team working together to help children and youth succeed. If at any time additional services and supports are needed, foster families can request a meeting with either their DCYF primary caseworker or their PFCA.

What will the training hours requirement be?

The Department aims for all licensed foster families to engage in training and development during each two-year licensing period. The DCYF website has a variety of resources, and DCYF will work with PFCA to offer additional trainings. Your PFCA may also have specific training requirements for their program.

As part of the foster care re-design, must foster families who are caring for children and youth with LON Tier Score 1-2 be supported by the Department, instead of a Private Foster Care Agency?

No, the system is built on a public/private partnership, where private agencies can also support families caring for children with lower Levels of Need.

How will the Department support families who do not work with a private agency?

As of August 1, 2020, to support the recruitment and retention of more foster families, the Department was approved to hire 14 new staff – most of whom will be caseworkers for the Division of Resource Families (the division responsible for supporting foster families). The Department also launched a partnership with Binti – a Web based platform designed to help support the licensing process for prospective foster families.

Will there be funding for extracurricular activities for children and youth in care?

The foster care maintenance payment is intended to support the needs of children; however, we know that some extracurricular activities can be very costly. DCYF does not have an additional budget for these activities at this time but will continue to work with our private agency partners on funding opportunities.

I don't work a "9-5" job. What childcare options are available to me?

All foster families qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) offered 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. If a child has special needs, resources may also be available after the child turns 13. Please contact the child's primary case worker to discuss these options.

There are CCAP childcare programs designed to accommodate families who need childcare outside the traditional work hours. But there are additional options for families who don't work "9-5." Please contact your PFCA or DCYF primary caseworker to determine what alternatives are available and best fit your family's needs.

Respite:

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. DCYF fully believes that respite should be available for foster families as a support. However, prior to this foster care re-design, Rhode Island's foster families experienced respite differently. Some PFCA's provided paid respite and some foster families had no access to respite. To streamline services and supports for *all* families, and most importantly to provide equity in foster board maintenance rates, the Department does not have additional funding to provide *paid* respite.

"Paid respite" refers to paying the foster board maintenance rate to both the child or youth's original foster family and the foster family providing respite. This inadvertently issued a double payment for a child or youth.

If a foster family sends a child or youth to respite care, does DCYF issue the foster board maintenance rate to the respite foster family or worker directly or does the foster family pay for respite from our monthly stipend?

Foster families are authorized to make prudent parenting decisions for the children and youth in their care. If a foster family chooses to arrange respite care with another foster family, the Department can pay the foster board maintenance rate directly to the family providing respite. DCYF and Private Foster Care Agencies can help to facilitate finding a respite support.

If the foster family identifies an appropriate babysitter or another family member to provide respite care, just as biological families would, the foster family can decide whether to compensate that caretaker from their monthly stipend.

I foster a child/youth with exceptional needs. They need 24/7 care and the appropriate respite services are costly. Even at the highest tier, it seems impossible to be able to afford respite care paid from the monthly stipend.

The Department recognizes that there are sometimes unique circumstances where a child has exceptional needs that may require additional caregiving supports. These are case specific decisions that should be discussed with the child's primary caseworker.

DCYF may authorize a separate payment to help provide additional caregiving support. This would be paid directly to the caregiver and would be separate from any foster board maintenance payment.

If that is not authorized, the foster family can decide whether to compensate an appropriate caretaker from their monthly stipend.

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



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