



Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard

Promoting Normalcy for Children in Out-of-Home Care

The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) is a standard for out-of-home care (OHC) providers to use when making decisions concerning a foster child's participation in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. It requires out-of-home care providers to consider certain factors when making decisions that promote normalcy for the child and encourage their emotional and developmental growth.

Normalcy is understood as engagement in healthy and developmentally appropriate activities that promote well-being such as social, scholastic, and enrichment activities. Children in out-of-home care should be able to pursue their interests, do what their peers can do, build skills for their future, and maintain connections with their culture, family and friends.

Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(1dm) defines age or developmentally appropriate activities to mean "activities that are generally accepted as suitable for children of a given chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child based on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for children of a given age or age group or, in the case of a specific child, activities that are suitable for the child based on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of that child."

Applicability and Frequently Asked Questions

To whom does the RPPS apply?

For the purposes of this standard, an OHC provider includes the following caregivers who have a child **placed** in their care:

- Unlicensed relatives and like-kin
- Licensed foster parents
- Guardians
- Congregate care facilities including group homes, shelter care facilities, and residential care centers.

This standard **does not apply** to respite care service providers.

Are OHC providers required to receive training on applying the RPPS?

Yes. OHC providers must receive training on RPPS **prior** to making decisions for the child. Placing agencies are required to provide training on the use of this standard and specific information about the child to OHC providers so they can apply the RPPS effectively. Below are the trainings on RPPS based on the type of OHC provider:

- **Unlicensed Out-of-Home Care Providers:** <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/reasonable-and-prudent-parenting-for-unlicensed-out-of-home-care-providers/>
- **Licensed Foster Parents** receive training on this standard within their foster parent preplacement training: <https://care.wcwpds.wisc.edu/foster-parent-pre-placement/>
- **Congregate Care Staff:** <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/reasonable-and-prudent-parenting-for-congregate-care-staff/>

What information does an OHC provider receive before making decisions using the RPPS?

Placing agencies are required to give the OHC provider the Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers [Part A \(DCF-F-CFS0872A\)](#) and [Part B \(DCF-F-CFS0872B\)](#) forms for each child placed with them. This includes information about the child's background, interests, needs and strengths. The OHC provider will make RPPS decisions based on the information they have for that child, as well as their own observations and assessment of the child while in care.

What factors do OHC providers need to consider when making decisions under the RPPS?

All RPPS decisions must be child and situation specific. For each decision, the OHC provider should consider all the following:

- The health, safety, and best interests of the child.
- The physical and emotional developmental level of the child.
- The child's wishes, as gathered by engaging the child in age-appropriate discussions about participation in the activity.
- The cultural, religious, and tribal values of a child and their family. If reasonably possible to do so, the foster parent should consult with the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian about decisions affecting the child.
- Court orders and other legal considerations affecting the child.
- Potential risks of the activity under consideration.
- Whether the child has the necessary training and safety equipment to safely participate in the activity under consideration.
- Whether participating in the activity will provide an experience that is similar to the experiences of the foster parent's children and other children in the home or in the congregate care facility.
- Developmental activities of peers.
- Details included on the Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers Part A and B forms.
- If an activity that promotes normalcy conflicts with a scheduled family interaction, therapy, or other appointment, the foster parent shall consult with the foster child's child welfare professional about whether the activity can be accommodated.

Does the use of the RPPS allow OHC providers to make any type of decision for the child?

No. RPPS does not allow an OHC provider to make decisions that:

- Permit the child to participate in an activity that would violate a court order or any federal or state statute, rule, or regulation.
- Conflicts with the child's permanency plan or family interaction plan.
- Consent to the child's marriage.
- Authorize the child's enlistment in the U.S. armed forces.
- Authorize medical, psychiatric, or surgical treatment for the child beyond the terms of the consent for medical services authorized by the child's parents, guardians, legal custodian, or Indian custodian.
- Represent the child in a legal action or make a decision of substantial legal significance.
- Determine which school the child attends or make a decision for the child regarding an educational right or requirement that is provided in federal or state law.
- Require or prohibit a child's participation in an age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, or social activity solely for the foster parent's own convenience or based solely on the foster parent's own values.

Is the child required to be involved in decision making under the RPPS?

Diligent effort should be made by the OHC provider and the placing agency to engage and include the child in the decisions impacting their life. Involving children in decisions about their participation in activities provides learning opportunities for the child, promotes independent living skills, and empowers the child to have a sense of control.

Is the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian required to be involved in decision making under RPPS?

Diligent effort should be made by the OHC provider and placing agency to engage and include the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian in the decisions impacting their child as they have valuable insight about the child that may help the OHC provider make decisions that promote the family's values and establish connections for the child.

If the child is an Indian child, the placing agency must ask the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian and the Indian child's tribe about specific tribal values and customs and provide this information to the foster parent.

Can an OHC provider take a child to get their haircut?

Haircare needs vary widely by race and culture. For children under 12, the OHC provider **may not** provide hair care, or authorize any hair care services, that would significantly change the style, cut, or color of the child's hair without permission from the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian. The OHC provider **may** provide hair care or authorize hair care services needed to maintain the style, cut, and color of the foster child's hair. An example of maintaining the child's current hair style could include taking a child to a hair care provider to maintain braids or twists if that is the style they had when placed in the OHC provider's home.

A child who is 12 years of age or older **may** make their own hair care decisions without authorization from the foster parent or the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian.

Regardless of the child's age, the OHC provider should consult with the child and their parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian when making decisions about the child's hair and styling preferences. Incorporating them in these decisions is a great way to learn about the cultural significance these decisions hold and enhance autonomy for the family.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to consent to piercings and tattoos?

No. Piercings and tattoos are permanent changes to a child's body, and consent can only be granted by the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian.

Can an OHC provider decide whether to take a child out of the state or country?

An OHC provider may make the decision to take a child out of state for a period less than 48 hours. The OHC provider is required to secure approval from the placing agency before taking a child out of state for more than 48 hours.

The OHC provider must get authorization from the placing agency with placement and care responsibility when taking the child out of the country for any time period. Placing agencies should refer to the U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs regarding requirements for obtaining passports for the child and what parental permissions are required: [U.S. Passports \(state.gov\)](https://state.gov/passports).

If the travel interferes with any scheduled family interaction, therapy or other appointment for the child, the OHC provider must secure authorization from the placing agency about whether the activity can be accommodated.

Can an OHC provider hire a babysitter for a child?

Yes. The OHC provider can arrange for occasional, short-term babysitters. OHC providers must note that an occasional, short-term babysitter is different than respite. RPPS should be used to decide if using a babysitter is appropriate, and how to select an appropriate babysitter for the child.

The OHC provider must get authorization from the placing agency when making alternative care arrangements for the child for **any period longer than 72 hours**.

Placing agencies may **not** implement policies or procedures that would require the occasional, short-term babysitter for the child to submit information necessary for the completion of a formal background check. The agency may obtain the first and last name of the responsible party and seek out information on that individual that is a matter of public record through methods such as checking CCAP and running a sex offender background check. OHC providers should have a conversation with the person responsible for supervising the child to ensure they understand any necessary care needs of the child, confirm that a proper level of supervision will occur, and provide emergency contact information in the event it is needed.

Group homes, shelter care facilities, and residential care centers are staffed agencies that are prohibited from hiring occasional, short-term babysitters for children placed in their care.

Can an OHC provider leave the child home alone for a temporary period of time?

Yes. Administrative rule for foster homes does not allow nonrelative foster parents to leave a child under 10 years of age without supervision by a responsible care provider. All OHC providers shall ensure that the child receives responsible supervision appropriate to their age, maturity, and abilities and use the RPPS to determine whether a children child may be unsupervised.

Group homes, shelter care facilities, and residential care centers are staffed agencies that provide supervision 24 hours a day and seven days a week and are prohibited from leaving a child alone in the facility.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to visit or sleep over at someone else's home?

Yes. The OHC care provider for a child placed in the community setting may allow a child to visit or sleep over at someone else's home. Congregate settings should include approval by the placing agencies before this is allowed for a specific child.

Peer interaction in informal settings is crucial to a child's development and to enhancing healthy peer relationships. OHC providers should consider the level of supervision that will be at these activities, whether they are familiar with the individuals attending the event or supervising the event and ensure that they have contact information for the location the child is going.

Placing agencies may **not** implement policies or procedures that would require the person responsible for supervising the child to submit information necessary for the completion of a formal background check. The agency may obtain the first and last name of the responsible party and seek out information on that individual that is a matter of public record through methods such as checking CCAP and running a sex offender background check. OHC providers should have a conversation with the person responsible for supervising the child to ensure they understand any necessary care needs of the child, confirm that a proper level of supervision will occur, and provide emergency contact information in the event it is needed.

Can an OHC provider allow a child in out-of-home care to babysit?

Yes. The OHC care provider for a child placed in the community setting may allow the child to babysit other children. The opportunity to babysit may be a great way for the child to gain independent living skills, demonstrate their responsibility, and earn money for other activities.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to get a part-time job?

Yes. Administrative rule allows caregivers that are court-ordered to care for a child to sign work permits ([WI Admin. Code ch. DWD 270](#)). Part-time jobs may be a great way for the child to gain independent living skills, demonstrate their responsibility, and earn money for other activities. RPPS should be used to help decide whether the child is ready for a part-time job considering their other obligations and when considering which type of part-time job is in their best interest.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to have a cell phone?

Yes. Access to cell phones and other technology allows children to keep in touch with their family, friends, and other important people in their lives. It also provides a way to communicate with them if they are away from the home and provides an opportunity to demonstrate their responsibility with technology.

OHC providers should carefully consider the child's trauma and behavioral history and if there is a need to limit access, monitor messaging, or utilize parental controls for safety purposes.

Group homes, shelter care facilities, and residential care centers that permit the use of cell phones must have a policy in place that sets parameters around such use.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to access social media?

Yes. Access to social media is a normal activity for a child that allows them to connect with peers and an opportunity to learn online safety. RPPS should be used to make decisions about a child's access to and use of social media and other technology, including the use of parental controls or other child safety monitoring.

OHC providers should carefully consider the child's trauma and behavioral history and if there is a need to limit access, monitor messaging, or utilize parental controls for safety purposes.

Group homes, shelter care facilities, and residential care centers must have a policy in place that sets parameters around the use of social media.

It is important to be aware of agency specific policies regarding the OHC provider's own use of social media and confidentiality. OHC providers may take a video or audio recording of a social or recreational activity the child is participating in, but **RPPS does not allow an OHC provider to post pictures, videos, or other information about children placed in their care on social media as RPPS does not supersede confidentiality requirements.**

Can an OHC provider give permission for a child to participate in extra-curricular activities such as sports, field trips, and other recreational activities?

Yes. OHC providers are allowed to enroll or sign a child up for these activities, in addition to signing safety forms related to these activities.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to have their picture taken for the school yearbook, teams, and other extra-curricular activities or achievements?

Yes. It is important to encourage children to participate in a variety of opportunities and for them to be recognized for that and their achievements. When approving this, there should be no indication that the child is in out-of-home care and that any accompanying information does not breach any confidentiality requirements or restrictions.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to get a driver's license?

Yes. Driving is a key independent living skill that will benefit the child in preparing for adulthood. The child must meet all requirements for the issuance of a permit or license by state statute and administrative code, including obtaining liability insurance coverage to operate a vehicle. An OHC who allows a child to drive their motor vehicle must ensure that the child is covered by their vehicle liability insurance policy, unless the child is placed with a relative or like-kin.

If an OHC provider is unable or unwilling to assist the child with insurance coverage and the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian is also unable or unwilling, the OHC provider should still pursue assisting the child in preparing for obtaining a driver's license. This may include signing the child up for driver's education classes or studying for required tests. The cost of a driver's education course is an allowable cost that can be added to the exceptional portion of the child's foster care rate.

Assisting the child in obtaining their driver's license does not mean that the OHC provider must allow the child to drive anywhere or anytime they want. Should the child obtain their license, the OHC provider should continue to use RPPS to make decisions regarding the child's driving to and from different activities.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to be transported by someone other than themselves (peers, public transportation, etc.)?

Yes. OHC providers must use the RPPS to make decisions regarding who can transport the child or the type of transportation the child can access (bus, ride-share, etc.). Any person acting on behalf of the foster parent who transports a foster child for any purpose shall possess a valid driver's license and vehicle liability insurance, unless the child is placed with a relative or like-kin. Placing agencies may **not** implement policies or procedures that would prohibit youth from getting rides from peers or require that OHC providers obtain the agency's approval for every person transporting the child.

Can an OHC provider allow a child to go hunting or participate in target practice?

Yes. An OHC provider may allow a child to go hunting in compliance with s. 29.591 or 29.592, Stats., and other applicable law, based on RPPS. When applying RPPS, the OHC provider must ensure:

- The child meets any legal age requirements.
- The child completed required hunter's education courses.
- The child is always under the supervision of a responsible adult.
- The child has all required & necessary safety equipment.

Whenever possible, OHC providers should consult with the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian about the child's participation in hunting or target practice. The OHC provider should also consider the child's trauma history and possible triggers or traumatic reactions a child may have to weapons.

Can a OHC provider allow a child to operate hazardous machinery or equipment?

Yes. An OHC provider may allow a child to operate hazardous machinery or equipment under RPPS within certain restrictions. [Wisconsin Admin. Code ch. DCF 56.07\(8\)\(a\)](#) defines hazardous machinery or equipment as "any machine or other equipment generally known to be hazardous to untrained or unskilled operators or to operators who for any other reason are physically or mentally unable to operate the equipment safely, including a motor vehicle, power lawn mower, tractor or other farm machinery or equipment, snowblower, chain saw, power-driven shop tool, snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle, utility-terrain vehicle and any other machinery or equipment determined by the licensing or supervising agency."

The OHC provider must ensure:

- Allowing the child to operate hazardous machinery or equipment does not violate a law that specifies a minimum age requirement or beyond the child's knowledge or mental or physical capability.
- All hazardous machinery or equipment used by the child is maintained in a safe operating condition.
- The child is always under the supervision of a responsible adult while operating the hazardous machinery or equipment.
- The child is properly trained and has been provided with the necessary clothing and safety equipment to operate the machinery or equipment.

The placing agency may require that a child complete a relevant safety course prior to operating hazardous machinery or equipment.

Are OHC providers liable for any injury or harm that occurs because of an activity approved using the RPPS?

An OHC provider is immune from civil liability for any act or omission of in granting permission for a child placed in their care to participate in an age or developmentally appropriate activity when applying the reasonable and prudent parenting standard. It should be noted that not all liability is covered under the use of RPPS if that liability is specific to other state and federal legislation. For example, Wisconsin law specifically states that an individual who endorses a child's driving permit takes on liability for that child's driving.

Additional Resources

2016-03 2015 WI Act 128: Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2016-03.pdf>

2017-26-LIC Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2017-26-lic.pdf>

2019-34-LIC Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Training:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2019-34-lic.pdf>

Ongoing Service Standards: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>

WCWPDS Training: <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/reasonable-and-prudent-parent-standard/>

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