

Foster Care Reimbursement Guidelines

Cherokee County Department of Family and Children Services

September 2011

Family Foster Care Per Diem

The Legislature has approved graduated per diem increases in family foster care and adoption assistance. The three per diem levels are defined according to the age of the child. Changes in the per diem level become effective the first day of the month following the month in which the child has a birthday. For example: Child has a birthday on August 7 and turns 6 years old; the new per diem level goes into effect on September 1.

Children placed in DFCS foster homes and in foster homes of approved child-placing agencies will have the following Basic Service Rates:

Birth through age 5	\$14.60
Age 6 years through age 12	\$16.50
Age 13 and older	\$18.80

In addition, a Sibling Incentive will be provided to promote sibling placements. The Sib-I will be applied to the monthly per diem reimbursement and is effective the month following initiation of the Sib-I. The Sib-I is available only to DFCS regular and relative foster homes.

Sibling Incentive (Sib-I)- A sibling group of three receives a Sib-I of \$100.00 for each sibling. For example: Jane, Daniel and Marla are placed in a DFCS foster home. The total per diem amount is reimbursed to the foster parent along with the Sib-I of \$300.00 (\$100.00 each for Daniel, Marla, and Jane). If there are four siblings, the Sib-I is a flat amount of \$400.00 for all of the related children. For example, Jane, Marla, Daniel, and Derrick are placed in a DFCS family foster home. The per diem amount for the children is reimbursed to the foster parent along with the Sib-I in the amount of \$400.00. **Note:** The maximum Sib-I reimbursement is \$400.00 for sibling groups where there are four or more children.

A special rate of \$.50 to \$1.75 may be added to the new Basic Services rate for a child whose care demands additional time and skills. The County Director has the authority to grant approval for the special rate. You will need to check with your child's case manager as to the special rate increase that affects the children in your care. If your child is currently receiving an increased per diem of \$1.75, please add this amount to your invoice per diem.

This per diem is reimbursable after the end of the month for the number of nights the child was in your care. Use the “head in the bed” rule; you can be reimbursed if the child spent the night in your home. The basic rate includes room and board, replacement clothing, medicine chest incidents (such as Tylenol, vitamins, etc.), and normal daily personal care products (hair care, lotions, etc.)

For children who require more time and attention than normal due to a child’s special needs, you should discuss these additional responsibilities with the child’s case manager. Some children may be eligible for a higher per diem based on their diagnosed conditions. The State Office determines the per diem amount, not the case manager.

Children who test positive for the HIV virus may receive a per diem of up to \$60.00 per day. The per diem is submitted on the Foster Care invoice on a monthly basis. You should charge per diem for each day the child was in your home including the day of arrival and the day of departure.

CLOTHING

While the per diem amount does include an allowance for replacement clothing, many children enter foster care with little or no clothing. For this reason, the State provides assistance in meeting the children’s clothing needs. Our local county also provides funds for a seasonal clothing allowance, which may be utilized according to the corresponding months, after the child has been in foster care for three (3) complete months. Original receipts are required with the Foster Care Invoice.

TO BE REIMBURSED, YOU MUST PROVIDE ORIGINAL RECEIPTS FOR YOUR PURCHASES.

You will not be reimbursed if you are unable to provide a dated original receipt. You will NOT be reimbursed if you exceed the allowable amounts for your child. If you have any questions about a child’s clothing amount, ask your child’s case manager. This is especially important if you provide care for a child who has moved from another foster home; the previous foster parent may have used part of or the entire child’s clothing allowance. Be sure to ask what clothing allowance is still available for your child. While it is not required, it is suggested that SEPARATE RECEIPTS be obtained for each child. It makes completing the invoice an easier task. If more than one child’s clothing is on one receipt, we must have the original receipt with one invoice, a copy for the other child, and indicate which purchases are for which child.

State Initial Clothing Allowance (original receipt required)

Birth through 12 years	\$200.00
13 years and up	\$300.00

Initial clothing may be purchased during the first six (6) months after the child enters foster care, up to the maximum amounts listed above. This does not apply to moves from one home to another or from a group home to a foster home or vice versa. No matter how many placements a child may have, he or she only receives an initial clothing allotment during the first 6 months that he or she is in foster care. If the initial clothing is not utilized during the first 6 months of placement, any unused balance is forfeited. When a child first enters foster care, the case manager will approve the amount of initial clothing to be spent. Initial clothing should be identified as such on the invoice.

STATE ANNUAL CLOTHING

\$300.00

State annual clothing may be purchased and submitted for reimbursement during the State Fiscal Year after a child initially enters foster care. This reimbursement is only available to family foster care parents, either related or non-related. Example: A child enters care in October 2009, during SFY 11 (July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011); the child is eligible for annual clothing.

Examples of Clothing Allowances for all Programs:

Date Client Comes Into Care	Initial clothing can be Authorized Beginning	Annual Clothing can be Authorized for FY 07
January 2006	January 2006	January 2007-June 2007
March 2006	March 2006	January 2007-June 2007
November 2006	November 2006	January 2007-June 2007

A child cannot receive initial clothing and annual clothing in the same **calendar year** that he/she enters care.

COUNTY CLOTHING REPLACEMENT ALLOWANCE
(Original receipt required)

AGE	AMOUNT
Birth-3 yrs	\$50
4-6 yrs	\$75
7-12 yrs	\$100
Over 12 yrs	\$150

The clothing replacement allowance may be purchased after the child has been in foster care three complete months. This allowance is available **per calendar year**. The

unused clothing replacement allowance amount DOES NOT CARRY OVER from year to year. Replacement clothing should be identified as such on the invoice.

Special clothing such as uniforms may be reimbursed if a funding source can be identified. The case manager must approve the type of expense in advance. You might not be reimbursed if you do not receive PRIOR approval. Since the State does not provide reimbursement for these costs, we must seek funding for reimbursement before approval is given.

Clothing purchased for a child should go home with that child. If a child outgrows clothing while in your home, the clothing may be used for other foster children in your home or another home. Although we do not have space to maintain used clothing at the DFCS office, we do encourage you to network with other foster parents to share good but outgrown clothing.

INCIDENTALS

SPECIAL NEEDS ITEMS- You must receive **prior approval** for all special needs items such as vaporizers, corrective shoes, or braces for teeth since these items are not reimbursable. **If approved, an original receipt is required**

INFANT FORMULA- THIS IS NOT REIMBURSABLE but is recommended for children from birth to 1 year of age. The Health Department administers the Women & Infant Children (WIC) Program providing vouchers to be used for the purchase of infant formula, cereal, fruit juices, etc. Special formulas can usually be approved via the Health Department. If you have a child under the age of 5 years, call the Health Department to arrange for a WIC appointment and coverage for your foster child(ren).

SCHOOL EXPENSES

- A. **School Insurance:** 24-hour coverage is needed only if Medicaid does not cover the child. Please get prior approval from the child's case manager. An original receipt is required.
- B. **Field Trips:** Fees are not reimbursable. The field trip fee is a donation and failure to pay for our children should not prevent them from attending the trip. If there is a big trip planned where we must pay in order for the child to attend, please discuss this with your child's case manager.

- C. **School Supplies:** Are not reimbursable. Please utilize the Give a Kid a Chance back-to-school program for free school supplies.
- D. **School lunches:** We do not reimburse for school lunches. Free lunches are available for most foster children and this program must be utilized. Please be aware that only the foster child's income is considered as household income. Foster children are considered a household of one for the school lunch program.
- E. **School Annuals:** There is no reimbursement unless the case manager finds a donation from the community.
- F. **Class ring, Cap, and Gown:** We may be able to assist with partial reimbursement depending on the availability of funds if ILP funds are not available. Please discuss this with the child's case manager prior to the event. An original receipt is required.

The child's case manager must approve any school expense not discussed here if reimbursement is sought. IF PRIOR APPROVAL IS NOT OBTAINED, YOU WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED. IF AN ORIGINAL RECEIPT IS NOT PROVIDED, YOU WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE

Most foster children are eligible for Medicaid to cover medical and dental expenses. If the child in your home is eligible, the case manager will advise you of the child's Medicaid number. Your case manager should be notified whenever a child needs medical attention. A foster child's birth parents must be kept apprised of health problems related to their children. Thus, a child's case manager needs to know as health and medical problems occur. It is necessary for the agency to notify and obtain parental or court consent for any non-emergency medical treatment (i.e., HIV testing, surgery or hospitalization, etc.) on behalf of foster children. The procedure for obtaining a court order to authorize elective surgery can be a slow process. Therefore, please discuss this with your child's case manager well in advance of any elective medical procedure.

It is very important that foster parents keep the child's case manager informed regarding all health and medical problems related to the foster child. We need to know when children go to the doctor or dentist for regular wellness checkups and we need to know the results of these visits. (i.e., weight, height, shots, etc.). Policy dictates that each child will have a yearly physical exam and dental check-up. You should provide written

verification of the child's medical appointments to the case manager. There are a limited number of doctors who will accept Medicaid. Before making appointments, always be sure to ask if the doctor, dentist, etc. will accept Medicaid. **Every effort should be made to use a Medicaid doctor** and Medicaid should also be used for prescriptions. We are unable to reimburse for routine medical care obtained from a non-Medicaid source. **Please note:** Medicaid providers are limited to twelve visits per year unless the medical provider requests a waiver. Medicaid will not reimburse more than one charge per day from the same type of provider (i.e., mental health counselors).

If you believe the child in your home needs dental care or glasses, he or she should be screened at the Health Department via the Early Prevention Screening Diagnostic Testing (EPSDT) program. As a foster parent, you may request the appointment for screening, and if a problem is found, the Health Department will make a referral to the appropriate doctor. Dental care should begin at age 3 and can be obtained through public or private providers. **Medicaid providers should be utilized.**

All medical expenses not covered by Medicaid are to be approved in advance by the child's case manager and listed on the monthly Foster Care Invoice if reimbursement is sought. These expenses should be discussed with the child's case manager in advance when it is a non-emergency.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Birthdays: The agency wishes to recognize our foster children on their birthday and make them feel special. It is suggested that you discuss with the child's case manager any items the child may want. We have many nice toys available from our Santa Program.

Christmas: Secret Santa will be used to provide the foster children's Christmas. Information regarding this will come in October of each year. Since Secret Santa takes care of the Christmas holiday, there will be no reimbursement for additional gifts given.

TRANSPORTATION

Medicaid Travel:

There are two options available for transportation to medical appointments. One provides transportation and the other provides reimbursement.

To arrange for transportation: You may call 404-298-1228, 404-656-3200, or 1-800-807-5030 to arrange for a van to pick you up and your foster child and be taken to the medical appointment and be returned to your home. This non-emergency

transportation system operates from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The phone is manned on Saturday from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

To be reimbursed: Please call and advise the operator that you are a foster parent and that you wish to provide your own transportation for your child. A telephone enrollment will be completed and instructions will be provided at that time. Forms will be mailed to your home for you to record your mileage. Once you have provided transportation, you mail in the completed forms. This company issues its checks on the 15th and the 30th of each month. Based on the date they received and processed your reimbursement forms, you will be mailed a check. The check will be made payable to you or the child for whom transportation is provided.

Out-of-Town Trips

Any trip over one hundred (100) miles requires an advance approval of the child's case manager.

The agency must share in the planning of out-of-town trips of children with foster parents for more than a weekend (3 days). When there is reasonable time to do so, foster parents are expected to advise the agency of weekend trips. The agency will make the final decision as to whether foster children will accompany foster parents out-of-state or country because parental consent to allow the child to travel must be obtained in advance. Therefore, foster parents need to give the child's case manager a two-week notice of the upcoming plans.

If a decision is made that a foster child will not accompany his or her foster parents during out-of-state travel, the agency will assume responsibility for making plans for the care of the child while the foster parents are away. If approval is given for the child to go out-of-state, the foster parents need to obtain written permission from the case manager for him or her to travel in case there is a medical emergency, medical treatment can be sought for the child.

AUTOMOBILE, MOTORCYCLES, AND OTHER MOTORIZED VEHICLES

- Youth ages 16 through 21 in foster care may operate a vehicle when all procedures outlined here are completed.
- Minors in foster care must be 16 years old and must have been in foster care for 18 months, and there should be an indication that the current placement will last until age 18.
- The minor must have a valid Georgia's driver's license.
- The birth parent must give written permission, and sign the Consent for Youth to Drive a Motorized Vehicle (Form 9), in order for the youth to obtain a license and

operate a vehicle. This form also documents the parent's ultimate responsibility. If we are unable to follow this procedure, we must obtain a waiver from our division director.

- The foster parent must provide written permission for the youth to use the foster parent's vehicle, understanding the foster parent's personal insurance is their only protection. Consideration of this privilege should be based on the level of judgment of the youth, completion of driver's education, school performance, intended use of vehicle (necessity for transportation to school, work, etc.), previous driving record, and history of runaways. A copy of Acknowledgement of DFCS Driving Policy for Youth in Care (Form 11) must be signed by the foster parents to accept the liability they assume when a youth is permitted to drive.

Understand and be aware, this agency will assume NO responsibility or liability for damage to the foster parents' properties in any respect in regard to a foster child driving an automobile or motorized vehicle owned by the foster parents or owned by the foster child.

MONTHLY FOSTER CARE INVOICES (FORM 526)

One form per month is to be completed for each foster child in your home. Please send the original foster care invoice to the DFCS office. It is recommended that you make and retain a copy of the invoices submitted. **We request your monthly Foster Care Invoices be received by the agency no later than the 20th of each month. If the invoice is not received by the 20th, you will not be paid until the check is cut on the 15th day of the next month.** If a child leaves your home after this date and before the month's end, the child's case manager will correct your invoice to read the correct number of days.

Telephone Reimbursements:

We have recently had several incidents occur when foster children made a number of long-distance calls on a foster parent's phone and in another incident 900-number calls were made by foster children. Also, there was a cellular phone used without permission, which resulted in a large bill. The agency CANNOT reimburse foster parents for any of these types of expenses from this point forward. If you need to take necessary action to put a long-distance block on your phone and lock up cell phones, please take such action.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR REIMBURSEMENT CHECK

From time to time, you may have a question about your foster care reimbursement check or you may not receive your check by the 15th of the month and want to call to find out if it has been sent. Please direct your call to the child's case manager, not accounting personnel. We will get an answer for you as soon as possible. The invoice will be reviewed by the bookkeeper and corrections made as needed by the case manager.

If you have any questions about how to complete these forms or about any reimbursements that are not approved, please feel free to discuss these with your Resource Development case manager or with the child's case manager.

REMEMBER: If invoices are not received by the agency by the 20th of every month, you will not be paid until the check is cut on the 15th of the next month. Delayed receipt of invoices can sometimes delay payment for up to two months! An original receipt must document each expense except for per diem.

Purchasing Child Restraint Transportation Devices

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2011. Children under age eight are required to be in a child safety seat or booster seat appropriate for their height and weight and used according to the manufacturer's instructions. The law also requires children under age eight to ride in the rear seat.

One Child Restraint Transportation Device may be reimbursed for a child who comes into foster care by submitting the cost on the Foster Care Invoice (Form 526). A receipt is required. That child restraint belongs to the child, the same as clothing purchased belongs to the child. If the child is under the age of 8 when he or she is returned to the parents, the restraint device goes home with him or her. Remember that **an original receipt is required for reimbursement**. If you would like to purchase a car seat to keep, that purchase CANNOT be reimbursed.

Foster Parent Insurance Coverage

See Foster Parent Manual, revised May 2006.

Foster Parent Grievance Procedure

See Foster Parent Manual, revised May 2006.

CHILDCARE FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

A need must be demonstrated with foster care children as in all subsidized childcare cases. This need is ordinarily due to the employment of the foster parent. If a child's behavior is particularly disruptive, a waiver to provide daycare reimbursement can be requested and may be granted. Daycare needs must be discussed with your child's case manager BEFORE the child is placed in daycare.

Daycare (CAPS) that is to be paid to the daycare provider shall only be purchased from the following types of providers: 1) Center-based care, 2) Group home care, 3) family daycare, 4) in-home vendors who comply with the unregulated childcare policies. If you have questions concerning this, please contact the CAPS case manager.

It is the foster parent's responsibility to contact their case manager with the following information: 1) reason daycare is needed 2) days and hours needed, 3) name, address, and phone number of childcare provider. The case manager fills out a Form 57 that is submitted to the daycare case manager. Daycare is then paid directly to the daycare provider. **Foster parents must report any daycare changes to the child's case manager. Failure to notify the child's case manager of the necessity for childcare as well as any changes regarding childcare will become the financial responsibility of the foster parent until childcare is approved by the agency.**

Confidentiality

Our agency entrusts you with a great deal of knowledge about the children in your care. In order to protect the rights of these children and their parents, we ask that you keep this information in confidence and not discuss it with anyone outside of agency personnel or the child's therapist. They deserve a private life. A violation of this policy MAY result in a lawsuit being brought against violators of the confidentiality policy.

SUPPLEMENTAL FOSTER PARENT TRAINING

Ten (10) hours of supplemental training for each foster parent is required every calendar year from January 1st through December 31st in order for foster parents to remain in approved status. You are required to obtain proof of your training and provide that documentation to your Resource Development case manager. Supplemental training must begin within 60 days of your approval.

Our policy for foster parents who do not have 10 hours of supplemental training is that the children that are in that home WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL FUNDING. Foster homes not in compliance will be put in temporary approval for these months in order to complete the requirement of 10 training hours. If you still do not have your hours at the end of that period, we may have to close your home and move your foster children. In addition, all relative foster parents must complete the IMPACT training and have 10 hours of supplemental training each year.

Life Book

It is recommended that a Life Book be maintained on each child who is in foster care for an extended period of time, which includes pictures, special school papers, awards, and anything else that will help a child maintain ties to his or her birth family and former placements. If you are interested in a Life Book for your child, please discuss the appropriateness of beginning one with your child's case manager. Limited supplies of Life Books are available at our office, upon request.

Independent Living

For youth in foster care that are age 14 or older, services are provided to help prepare those youth with basic life skills necessary for successful adult living. If you have a child of this age, please ask the child's case manager about services that are available.

Handling After-Hours Emergencies

A Statewide After-Hours Intake Center has been created to accept calls when DFCS offices are closed. To report abuse and neglect, call 855-GA-CHILD (855-422-4453). Cherokee County DFCS has a regional after hours unit that can be contacted after business hours during the week, weekends, holidays, and furloughs. If you have an emergency and need to contact the on-call worker, contact Cherokee 911 and explain that you are a foster parent and have an emergency that requires the DFCS on-call worker.

If you are out of county, you may reach 911 by calling 678.493.4080. We do ask that you utilize the on-call worker rather than trying to reach the child's case manager directly.