

UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS:
What Alaskan Foster Parents Need to Know
TOPIC: #2 Daily Life, Program, and Activities

7 AAC 67.230 Program and management in the foster home
7 AAC 67.323 Premises
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This series is a guide to the regulations but is not a substitute. In all differences between the information in this series and the regulations, the regulations are the final authority. Contact your licensing worker for a complete copy of the regulations.

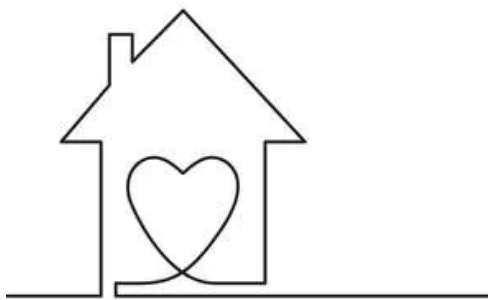
A foster home provides a safe and nurturing place for children in care providing an environment that is clean, safe, enriching and sensitive to a child's developmental needs. It is especially important for young children to be in a home that is responsive to their needs and knowledgeable about development.

Many children who come into foster care may experience delays in their development or have special needs because of their early experience. Delays mean your child cannot do what a child of his age should be able to do. Delays can be physical or emotional or social. In addition, if foster parents do not actively promote a child's development, children could fall behind in the foster home. Foster homes should do everything they can to help promote the physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development of a child in care.

In order to help children in your foster home—1.) keep your premises safe, practice harm reduction, and 2.) seek to establish a nurturing and enriched environment for kids to grow.

WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About Setting Up Your Premises?



Safety first! The place you live doesn't need to be fancy, but it does need to be safe. The foster care regulations require foster parents to keep their premises clean, sanitary, safe and in good repair. During a home visit, your licensing worker is looking for things that might be unsafe to a child, and so will inspect heating devices, water supply, solid waste disposal and access to emergency exits such as windows and doors. Ongoing, foster parents are expected to keep premises free of hazards that could hurt children such as splintered surfaces, sharp edges, broken or hazardous toys, ice on walkways and unsafe play areas.

Foster homes should be safe and clean places to be, so they are required to have plumbing that is up to state or municipal plumbing code. The bathroom should be kept clean and sanitary with toilet tissue, an easily cleanable waste paper basket and covered diaper pail. Step stools, if being used, need to be safe with a non-slip tread.

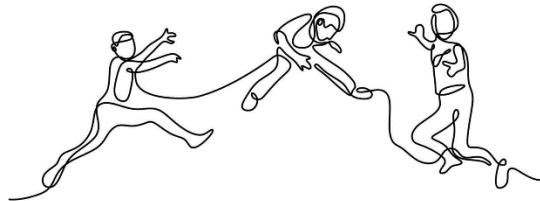
Accidents happen when people can't see very well in the dark, so make sure all general areas provide an artificial light source and hot water temperature is kept between a minimum of 100 degrees and not more than 120 degrees. Rodents and pests should be controlled and in general, your home should be kept free of hazards, including safely storing toxic materials such as cleaners and medicines. Be careful to use non-toxic arts and crafts material with children and be aware of poisonous plants such as poinsettias, English ivy and philodendron. These plants should be in place inaccessible or not easily accessed by children and your licensing worker should be aware of what you have in your home.

WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About Expectations for Caring for Children?

How children feel about themselves heavily depends on how others treat them. Make sure that children get basic, decent clothing and help them feel good about how they look. The regulations specify that:

- A child in care shall be clean and groomed appropriately. A foster parent is responsible for providing a child in care with items needed for grooming and personal hygiene,
- A foster home is responsible for providing each child in care with clean well-fitting clothing appropriate to the age of the child and seasonal weather conditions,
- A foster home is responsible for ensuring chores are shared equitably with other children in the home and do not interfere with school, health and recreation and appropriate to child's age, health and ability.



It is important to set up an environment that is enriching and sensitive to a child's developmental needs. This type of environment should:

- Help the child develop age appropriate patterns of behavior that foster constructive relationships and increase the child's coping skills.
- Provide the child with access to safe and suitable toys and activities that contribute to develop the child's physical, mental, social and emotional skills.

WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About School, Religion and Activities?

Help set up the child's education plan by providing a space for homework and materials, A child in care shall attend a public school unless the department approves alternate education. A foster parent may not transfer a child from the child's home school to another school without permission from the child's caseworker.

It is the foster parent's role to support the child's choice of participation in religious or faith based services, including providing for transportation to those services. Likewise, the foster parent must also support the child's choice of participation in ethnic or cultural events including providing transportation to those events.

Having your foster children do chores is fine if the chores are shared equitably amongst the family members and they do not interfere with school, health or necessary recreation. Allowances should also be equitable with other family members. If children receive money from allowances and gifts, the foster parent should educate children about money management as age appropriate. A foster parent can limit access to a child's money if in the child's best interest and should notify the caseworker if the child's funds or savings exceed \$200. Under no circumstance may a member of your household borrow or spend a child's money.

A child in care should have access to the personal belongings they bring into care or acquire while in care. If you have any health or safety concerns around these possessions, discuss this issue with the caseworker.

WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS SAY...

About Infants and Young Children

The first years of life are critical for brain development along with physical, emotional and social development. As a foster parent, you play a critical role in this development. Safety, sensitive caregiving, and age appropriate activities are important factors in nurturing and parenting children in foster care.

Safety from Injury:

The regulations focus on the special needs for safety at this age. If caring for young children, install and use safety gates or department approved barrier to prevent access to stairs. Install outlet covers in all electrical outlets that are not in use and that are accessible.

Play is important for children. If you have a play area for children, make sure the play area is free of hazards that can cause injury. Select and maintain play equipment so that it is securely anchored (unless portable and self-supporting). Make sure it is free of entrapment, pinch or crush points, sharp points, corners or edges.

Diapers and Toilet Training:

Foster homes caring for children in diapers should make sure that diapers are changed regularly, that soiled areas on the child are washed and dried, and that the spread of disease, discomfort, and infection is minimized. Do not leave children unattended on a diaper changing surface.

Children should never be punished in regards to toilet training. Make sure that toilet learning is individualized to the needs of your particular child and developmentally appropriate. It should never be forced or done in a punitive manner.

Feeding:

If you have infants in your home, the regulations also address the expectations of foster parents around bottle use. If you are reusing bottles, bottle caps, and nipples, wash them in a dishwasher before reuse, using a long wash cycle with hot water and a heated drying cycle or boil them in water for at least five minutes. Refrigerate filled bottles. If bottles are not used immediately, contents must be discarded if not used within 20 hours.

If you have an infant who is at least six months of age and able to hold their own bottle, make sure they stay within your sight while feeding. Take bottles from a child when they finish feeding, when the bottle is empty or when the child falls asleep. Never prop a bottle while feeding an infant.

Obtain approval from the child's caseworker if breast milk is provided by anyone other than an infant's biological mother.



If You Foster Young Children...

Foster care regulations state, "a licensee shall provide structure and daily activities designed to promote healthy physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development appropriate to the developmental stages of children in care."

Foster parents need to promote healthy development of all children in their care, but this is particularly critical for the young child in foster care. As a foster parent for young children, you should also have a variety of materials, toys and equipment available that are appropriate to the child's age. Store them safely and have at least some of the toys and materials stored so children can reach them easily.

In your home, give children regular time for:



Self-expression and imaginative play such as: *crayons, paints, clay, dress up, singing, puppets, and make-believe*

Physical activity both indoors and outdoors (when weather and the child's health permit) such as: *providing pillows to jump on, taking children for walks, outdoor play equipment, tricycles*

Learning independence such as: *how to dress, brush teeth, feed self, and make choices*

Developing the mind and the ability to get along with others such as: *outings, talking, books, games to play with others, blocks, puzzles, card games, hide and seek*

If you have a baby or a toddler in your home:

- ☞ Do not routinely leave a child awake in a crib for more than 15 minutes without adult contact. Talk to the baby, pick him up, rub his back or belly for a few minutes, play with the baby, change the toys in the crib, or put on some music.
- ☞ Talk to the child often. Talking to children from infancy has proven to be very effective in furthering a child's mental and social development. Reading, even to a very young child, has shown to be very beneficial in learning words, social interactions, emotional development, and brain development.
- ☞ Let the child play under adult supervision outside a playpen or restraining device every day.



TEST

For more information about the **UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS: What Alaskan Foster Parents Need to Know** series, contact the Alaska Center for Resource Families at 1-800-478-7307. In Fairbanks/North Pole, call 479-7307.