



A FOSTER PARENT GUIDE:

Caregiver Supports Resource Level Determination

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CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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WHAT IS THE CAREGIVER SUPPORT RESOURCE LEVEL DETERMINATION?

You will receive a foster care maintenance reimbursement to help you meet the needs of every child or youth who comes into your home through the foster care system.

Once a child or youth is placed in your foster home, a Placement Resource Specialist (PRS) will use a Caregiver level tool to determine a child or youth's support needs. The PRS will also review a level recommendation based on health history data to see if the child or youth has more support needs that were not identified before and that need to be considered for the level determination. The caregiver support resource level will be entered into FamLink, a Department of Children, Youth & Families management information system that connects to the payment system, so you are paid the appropriate reimbursement rate based on your caregiver support resource level. This level will be reviewed every six months.

Following the entry of the caregiver support resource level, you will receive a notification letter explaining the level and how you can appeal if you believe there is additional information about the child or youth's needs that were not considered in the Caregiver Support Resource Level determination process.

WHAT FACTORS GO INTO A CAREGIVER SUPPORT RESOURCE LEVEL DETERMINATION?

The Caregiver Support Resource Level determination identifies the needs of the child or youth in order to provide supports to the caregiver.

The Caregiver Supports Model has seven levels. The levels are defined by the behavioral, emotional, physical and mental health needs of the child or youth.

Foster Care reimbursements are based on the levels in the model and the age of the child or youth.

Within the levels are three different age categories: 0 to 5; 6 to 11; and 12 and older. The older the child or youth, the higher the reimbursement rate.

- Level 1 is the basic amount of reimbursement provided to caregivers of any child or youth based on their support needs.
- Level 2 is for youth ages 12 and up that have low support needs. This is the only level that does not have reimbursement segmented by age, it is only for youth aged 12 and up.
- Levels 3-7 represent different categories of need experienced by children and youth in the care of DCYF. See the Levels of Caregiver Supports section for more information.

The caregiver support resource level determination is made up of two parts. There is an initial assessment that is completed by DCYF Placement Resource Specialists (PRS) to identify a child or youth's needs. After the initial assessment is completed, the PRS will review a level recommendation based on health history information that is available from the Healthcare Authority. The PRS will make a final caregiver support resource level determination based on the initial assessment along with the tool and health history information so as to use the most comprehensive information available about the child or youth.

WHEN IS A CAREGIVER SUPPORT RESOURCE LEVEL DETERMINATION DONE?

- Initial assessments are completed within seven (7) days of placement.
- The initial assessment will be validated using health history information from the Health Care Authority and validated information will be reflected in the assessment within fourteen (14) days from receipt of the health history.

- Every six months from the initial assessment.
- When a substantial change occurs in the child or youth's circumstances, the foster parent, Tribe or the child or youth's assigned caseworker may request a reassessment be completed by the PRS.

In all cases, the PRS will inform you of any changes to the youth's level.

LEVELS OF CAREGIVER SUPPORTS

LEVEL 1: The child does not have any identified health or behavioral needs.

LEVEL 2: The youth is 12 years of age or older with no identified health or behavioral needs.

LEVEL 3: The child or youth has a chronic health condition. A chronic condition is one that is expected to last at least a year and requires increased use of health care resources and ongoing treatment to control the condition. The condition is debilitating, continuously or episodically, progressive, lifelong, and/or malignant.

LEVEL 4: The child or youth has a developmental disability, a pervasive learning disability, motor or tic syndrome, down syndrome, or is otherwise eligible for Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) services.

LEVEL 5: The child or youth has both a chronic health condition, autism (see Level 3) and a developmental disability (see Level 4).

LEVEL 6: The child or youth has a mental health diagnosis and/or a prescription for a mental health condition within the last 15 months.

Children or youth with frequent running behaviors defined as two or more times, overnight in a 30-day period will also be a Level 6 if they do not meet the criteria for a higher level.

Children or youth who are determined SAY through regional SAY committee or adjudicated for sex offense, and/or have a supervision plan for sexualized behaviors will also be a Level 6.

LEVEL 7: The child or youth who has attempted suicide or self-harm resulting in medical attention during the last 15 months, and/or has received crisis mental health services in the last 15 months inclusive of short-term inpatient services like emergency department (ED) stays or visits.

Children or youth in long-term mental health treatment placements within the last 15 months are also a Level 7 including Children's Long-Term Inpatient Program (CLIP), or other mental health treatment services for youth.

A child or youth who has been to the ED for overdosing or poisoning is a Level 7 as well as children or youth that have taken four or more psychotropic prescriptions for at least 60 days in the prior 15 months.

WHAT IF I AM LICENSED THROUGH A TRIBE OR PRIVATE AGENCY?

If you are licensed through a Tribe or private agency, the same rules apply to you that apply to state-licensed foster parents. The Placement Resource Specialist will make a caregiver support level determination and work with your tribal or private agency case manager as needed. Tribes may complete their own caregiver support resource level determinations **if that is the agreement** they have established with DCYF.

REQUESTING A REVIEW OF THE CAREGIVER SUPPORTS LEVEL DETERMINATION

Can a foster parent request a review of the Caregiver Supports Level Determination?

Foster parents, may request a review of the caregiver supports level if they believe there is additional information about the child or youth's needs that were not considered in the determination.

How does it work?

1. The foster parent must make a written request for a review of the assessment.
2. The request must be sent to the individual at the address identified in the foster caregiver support resource level determination notification letter.
3. The request must be received within 20 calendar days of the date of the notification letter. If the request is not made within 20 days, the assessment will not be reviewed, with some exceptions. An extension may be granted:
 - If the foster parent has contacted a regional foster parent liaison within the initial 20 day time period and asked for assistance to informally resolve any disagreement as to the rate assessed.
 - If the Department believes good cause exists for an extension.
4. The request must include a statement explaining why the foster parent believes the caregiver support resource level determination is incorrect. The foster parent must explain what additional information about the child or youth's needs was not reviewed and considered in the determination process by DCYF.

What happens during the review?

1. A staff member not involved in the original caregiver support resource level determination process, either a management level staff member or someone designated by that staff member, will conduct the review.
2. The review will be conducted within 10 calendar days of receiving the request for review.
3. The reviewer will consider:
 - (a) if the information about the child or youth's needs provided by the foster parent in the appeal was or was not reviewed as part of the caregiver support resource level determination.
 - (b) whether the information was accurately entered into and processed by FamLink.
4. The Department will not consider information about the child or youth that is outside the criteria considered in the Caregiver Supports Level determination tool and they will not alter a FamLink calculation that is based on a properly completed tool.

How does the foster parent learn about the decision on the appeal?

1. The Department will send the foster parent a written letter stating it:
 - (a) upheld the caregiver support resource level determination; or
 - (b) agrees the caregiver support resource level determination did not take into consideration the information presented by the foster parent and DCYF will adjust the support level.
2. If the Department upholds the level determination, the notice will provide information about further review.

How does the foster parent appeal the Department's decision on review?

1. If the Department upholds the caregiver support resource level determination on review, the foster parent has the right to request a further review of the assessment by timely requesting an administrative hearing.
2. The request must be in writing and sent to the Office of Administrative Hearings
2420 Bristol Ct. S.W., First Floor
P.O. Box 42488
Olympia WA 98504-2488
3. The request must be received by the Office within 20 days from the date of the letter notifying the foster parent of the Department's decision on the review.
4. Foster care providers and recipients of foster care funds can request an administrative hearing review of the specific rate for a specific child or youth but do not have the legal right to request an administrative hearing to challenge or dispute the established rates/levels of the foster care program or to challenge the foster care rate assessment form, questions or program.

What issues may be decided by the Administrative Law Judge?

1. The Administrative Law Judge will only consider information that was considered by the Department's review:
 - (a) if the information about the child or youth's needs provided by the foster parent in the appeal was or was not reviewed as part of the caregiver support resource level determination.
 - (b) whether the information was accurately entered into and processed by FamLink.
2. The Judge must not consider information about the child or the foster family that is outside the criteria considered in the caregiver supports level determination tool or that was not provided to the Department at the time of the caregiver support resource level determination.
3. The Judge must not make a determination that conflicts with a properly completed caregiver support resource level determination.
4. The Judge must not consider a challenge to the Department's established caregiver support resource level determination or to the caregiver support resource level determination tool or program.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I provide input for the caregiver support resource level determination?

The level determination will be completed by the DCYF Placement Resource Specialist using a standardized tool. You may be contacted to provide information for six-month reviews. You may appeal a determination if you believe it did not consider all needs of the child.

Can a child or youth be assessed at different levels in different homes?

No. The caregiver support resource level determination is based on the needs of the child or youth so it remains the same if the child changes placements. The level could change if the child's circumstances and support needs change.

Do siblings placed in the same foster home require separate level determinations?

Yes. Each child or youth needs their own caregiver support resource level determination because the level is based on the individual needs of the child or youth.

How will I be notified of the caregiver support resource level determination reimbursement I will receive?

You will receive a letter via mail or email notifying you of the support level of the child or youth in your care.

What happens when a child or youth goes on the run?

Under state policy, if you agree in writing to accept the child or youth back in your home before 15 days expires, the reimbursement continues for 15 days. After the child or youth is on the run for 15 days on, the reimbursement is stopped and the placement is closed. If the child or youth returns to your home or a new home after 15 days, a new placement is opened and reimbursement will restart at the caregiver support resource level that was already determined.

What happens when a level is changed due to significant changes in health or behavioral needs?

The Placement Resource Specialist can review the level determination at any time a caregiver or social worker requests a review due to changes in the child or youth's support needs. The review could increase the level of reimbursement.

This rate change can only be applied to current or future care of the child or youth, not to past care. Placement Resource Specialists will also review caregiver support resource level determinations every six months to see if additional health history information is available that would impact the level.

When can a Case Aide provide additional services?

The child or youth may be eligible for additional supports and services regardless of the rate. Sometimes approval for such services must come from regional management.

In other situations, the child or youth's caseworker can assist with referrals to community supports or other public assistance. Case Aide hours will be automatically available to caregiver support resource Levels 3-7 without referrals.

Are additional services such as special equipment and/or specialized therapy part of the caregiver support level reimbursement?

No. Additional services are paid for separately from the monthly caregiver support resource level reimbursement.

What happens with the completed caregiver support resource level determination tool?

A completed copy of the tool is kept in the child or youth's case file and a history of all determinations completed for the child or youth is kept in FamLink.

What happens if I disagree with the assessed support level determination?

You can appeal a support level decision. This can occur three times: when the rate is initially determined, when it is reduced, or when it is terminated.

When does a child or youth's caregiver support resource level reimbursement end?

The reimbursement ends when:

1. the child or youth is placed in a different foster home;
2. the child or youth is returned to the biological parent;
3. the child or youth is adopted;
4. the youth turns 18 and is not participating in the Extended Foster Program; or
5. if the youth is participating in the Extended Foster Care program, the reimbursement will end on the youth's 21st birthday or when they lose eligibility for extended foster care.



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