

CLINTON COUNTY JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER CARE PROGRAM RESPITE POLICY

The following is the **Respite Policy** set forth by Clinton County Job and Family Services' Foster Care Program for foster families licensed by the Clinton County Child Protection Unit.

Respite Care is defined as short term care of a foster child for the purpose of offering support and relief to a foster parent. Respite care can be from as little as two hours or up to seven consecutive days. Respite care is different than child care in that it is for certain circumstances and child care is for foster parents who work outside the home.

If a foster parent cannot utilize an alternative approved caregiver then they may request respite care by contacting the foster child's worker **at least one week in advance, unless they are in a crisis or experiencing a family emergency.**

When Respite Care can be utilized:

The following circumstances would warrant a foster parent to request respite care:

- A break from parenting a child who has significant emotional and behavioral issues.
- A foster family who is experiencing a family crisis or medical emergency.
- A foster family who is going on a business trip or vacation and cannot take the foster child with them.
- The child's caseworker identifies that you may be in need of a respite for you and your family's emotional well-being.

Amount of Respite that is allowable:

A foster family may utilize respite care for up to one weekend a month, but no more than two weekends if they are experiencing a situation as defined in this policy and it is approved by the child's caseworker and the Foster Care Coordinator. In the case of vacation requests, respite care should not be for more than **seven** consecutive days and any longer should only be for special or unusual circumstances. **At any time Respite Care cannot be for more than 14 days.** The agency recognizes that each child that is placed in a foster home will have unique issues and special needs; therefore, the amount of time for respite will be determined on a case by case basis. The purpose of respite care is to offer support and alleviate the stressors of foster parenting. Therefore, the agency will carefully assess each foster family circumstance to ensure that they are receiving the maximum and most beneficial services.

How to request Respite Care:

When a foster parent is in need of respite, they must first call their foster child's caseworker to request this service. If the caseworker is not available, they then may call or speak to the Foster Care Coordinator to request services.

1. If requesting a day or weekend respite, a foster parent must call at **least one week in advance to request respite care. The specific date and times must also be given to the agency.**
 2. If requesting a week respite, a foster parent must call **at least two weeks in advance** to the child's caseworker with dates and times.
 3. If requesting respite for more than **seven days**, a foster parent must call **30 days in advance of the respite request with specific dates to the child's caseworker.**
- **FOSTER PARENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT WE CANNOT ALWAYS GUARANTEE A SPECIFIC RESPITE REQUEST IF A FOSTER HOME IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR THAT TIME AND DATE. HOWEVER, A DILIGENT EFFORT WILL ALWAYS BE PUT FORTH TO TRY AND HONOR THE FOSTER PARENT'S REQUEST.**
 - **IN CASES OF EMERGENCIES, THE AGENCY WILL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESPITE AND MAY BE ABLE TO UTILIZE OTHER RESOURCES IF NECESSARY.**

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