

*Training Resource on*  
**Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard**  
*(Also includes information on telephone access for foster youth)*

**For Child Welfare Workers**

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# REASONABLE AND PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD TRAINING RESOURCE FOR CHILD WELFARE WORKERS

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## ABOUT THIS TRAINING RESOURCE

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**Purpose:**

This brief training resource is designed to disseminate vital information about the reasonable and prudent parent standard to everyone affected by the changes in the law. It is designed with some activities that can be conducted by a trainer, or by a supervisor or facilitator. The activities last about one hour, and could be used during a regularly scheduled meeting, such as a unit meeting. The training resource can be used to orient child welfare workers. (See the separate curriculum resource for managers and supervisors, which can be used to prepare supervisors or managers to facilitate the training in a meeting.)

**Format:**

The training resource is formatted similarly to other curricula used by the training system in California. It has the following components:

*Learning Objectives* – These are brief, measurable statements of the knowledge, skills, and values that the trainee should get out of the training. The facilitator/supervisor should read them to be clear on what the specific purposes of the training are.

*Title IV-E Competencies* – These competencies guide practice and MSW education in California. They are included to show how this training resource applies to larger practice.

*Lesson Plan* – This is a brief map of the activities included in the training which maps the Learning Objectives to each segment of the training. It should help the facilitator see how the whole training fits together.

*Training Activities* – These give specific instructions/suggestions for each segment of the training, and indicate what materials are needed, and how to conduct and process the training activities. Facilitators should read these and be familiar with them. This is not a scripted training, so facilitators may want to modify some of the discussion to fit the needs of their particular county or audience.

*Supplemental Handouts* – These are part of a separate document, and are intended for the participants or trainees to use. You should have a copy for each person. You may

want to print the handouts for each segment on different color paper to make it easier to distinguish them during the training. It is vital that the facilitator knows what all of the participants are using. Again, these may be modified for use with a particular group of trainees or a particular county. *All-County Letters (ACLs)* and *All-County Information Notices (ACINs)* are included in separate pdf-formatted documents. These are the official information released by the state to the counties, and are not modified.

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### **Knowledge:**

- K1.** The trainee will be able to identify current barriers and solutions to the barriers in implementing the reasonable and prudent parent standard for the youth in out-of-home placements.

### **Skills:**

- S1.** The trainee will be able to articulate the reasonable and prudent parent standard for out-of-home caregivers and provide two examples for out-of-home caregivers on the reasonable and prudent parent standard.
- S2.** The trainee will be able to develop two strategies to implement the reasonable and prudent parent standard for out-of-home caregivers.

### **Values:**

- V1.** The trainee will value the role of out-of-home caregivers in making reasonable and prudent parent decisions about the child or youth in their care.

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## TITLE IV-E CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES

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*The Title IV-E MSW competencies were developed for the M.S.W. specialization in public child welfare in California, a two-year, full time graduate program. The MSW competencies may overlap with the common core competencies, but are primarily designed for a full MSW program. Learning objectives and competencies in the common core support the MSW Title IV-E competencies, but not all of the IV-E material can be delivered during an in-service training session. MSW Title IV-E competencies may therefore be linked to multiple topic areas of the common core.*

Student understands policy issues and legal requirements affecting child welfare practice and how to implement these requirements. (2.10)

Student demonstrates understanding of the stages, processes, and milestones of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of children. (3.1)

Student demonstrates knowledge of the philosophy, purpose, requirements, and application of federal and state child welfare policy and legislation. (6.1)

Student works collaboratively with biological families, foster families, and kin networks, involving them in assessment and planning, and supporting them in coping with special stresses and difficulties. (6.6)

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## CONTEXT

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As part of the reform efforts in child welfare in California, the Legislature and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) have spearheaded legislative and regulatory changes that are designed to enhance one of the Adoptions and Safe Families Act goal, that of child well-being. These changes seek to provide the caregivers with more latitude in decision-making, and align the state through law and regulations with child welfare best practices.

This training module is designed for child welfare workers to:

- Define the reasonable and prudent parent standard as defined in All-County Letters,
- Identify current practice and barriers that impact the implementation of the reasonable and prudent parent standard for youth in out of home care,
- Develop at least two strategies to implement the reasonable and prudent parent standard with out-of-home caregivers.

As a statewide training resource, this material was developed by the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), with the guidance of the County Welfare Directors Association's (CWDA) Children's Committee, the Statewide Training and Education Committee (STEC), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

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## LESSON PLAN

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Topic/Time	Learning Objectives	Methodology
<p><b>Segment 1</b> <b>20 minutes</b></p> <p><b>Defining the Reasonable &amp; Prudent Parent Standard</b></p>	<p>S1 The trainee will be able to articulate the reasonable and prudent parent standard for out-of-home caregivers and provide two examples for out of home caregivers on the reasonable and prudent parent standard.</p>	<p><b>Activity 1:</b> Facilitated Discussion - Defining the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard</p> <p><b>Handouts:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The What and Why of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard</li> <li>2. Caregiver Information Sheet: Extracurricular, Enrichment And Social Activities</li> <li>3. Caregiver Information Sheet: Use of Occasional Short-Term Babysitters</li> </ol> <p><i>ACLs and ACINs may also be distributed.</i></p>

Topic/Time	Learning Objectives	Methodology
<p><b>Segment 2</b> <b>20 minutes</b></p> <p><b>Applying the Reasonable &amp; Prudent Parent Standard to decisions</b></p>	<p>S1 The trainee will be able to articulate the reasonable and prudent parent standard for out-of-home caregivers and provide two examples for out of home caregivers on the reasonable and prudent parent standard.</p>	<p><b>Activity 2:</b> What Are Reasonable Decisions?</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> 4. What Are Reasonable Decisions?</p>
<p><b>Segment 3</b> <b>20 minutes</b></p> <p><b>Creating action plans for change</b></p>	<p>K1 The trainee will be able to identify current barriers and solutions to implementing the reasonable and prudent parent standard for the youth in out of home placements.</p> <p>S2 The trainee will be able to develop two strategies to implement the reasonable and prudent parent standard for out-of-home caregivers.</p> <p>V1 The trainee will value involvement and collaboration with out- of-home caregivers in determining how the reasonable and prudent parent standard will be applied uniquely for each youth in out-of-home care.</p>	<p><b>Activity 3:</b> Current Child Welfare Work Practice and What Needs to be Changed</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> 5. Action Plan for Changing Practice</p>

## TRAINING ACTIVITY SEGMENT 1

### DEFINING THE REASONABLE AND PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD

**Approximate time:** 20 minutes

**Preparation:**

- It is recommended that you distribute the handouts prior to the training, so that people can review them and be knowledgeable.
- You should also have copies available, in case people don't bring the copies. You will also be reviewing the material, since some of the people will not have reviewed it.

**Materials:**

- Easel and chart pad paper, markers, tape (optional)
- Handout One: *The What and Why of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard*
- Handout Two: *Caregiver Information Sheet: Extracurricular, Enrichment, and Social Activities, and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard*
- Handout Three: *Caregiver Information Sheet: Use of Occasional Short-Term Babysitters and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard*

**Training Activity:**

- Explain the purpose of the training.
- Provide trainees with *Handout One: The What and Why of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard*. This handout also includes information on the new regulations on telephone access for foster children. Briefly review the key points of the handout, including the definitions.
- Ask the group how this change in law might change practice, and chart their answers on note paper if it is available.
- Point out that the terms “Reasonable” and “Prudent” are inherently subjective. This will be the challenge in implementing the changes.
- The leader can develop a beginning baseline of who is aware of the prudent parent standard and sets the stage for the next activity.
- The ACLs and ACIN that are cited in this handout should also be available for further clarification.
- Review the Caregiver Information Sheets. These were developed by the California Department of Social Services as a resource to provide to caregivers (foster parents, FFAs, etc.) to help inform them of the changes in practice.

**Processing This Activity:**

- Make sure that the group understands the intent of the legislature to normalize the experience of foster care and empower foster parents to make routine decisions for care.
- The supervisor/trainer can use the following brief synopses of the ACL's and ACIN below to review (please refer to the entire ACLs and ACIN for complete information).

*End of Activity*

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<b>Summaries of Related ACLs and ACINs</b>
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**All-County Letter No. 05-39****Extracurricular, Enrichment, and Social Activities for Foster Children**

The purpose of this All-County Letter (ACL) is to provide information and guidance regarding recent changes to state law which entitles foster children to participate in age-appropriate, extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities.

In 2003, AB 408 enacted provisions of W&IC Section 362.05 which provides that: Youth that are dependents are entitled to age appropriate extracurricular activities, that caregivers use the reasonable and prudent parent standard in determining which activities are appropriate given the child's age, maturity, and developmental level. Further state and local regulation and policy prohibits barriers for such participation by youth in these activities and are to modify current regulation and policy to conform to state law.

**All-County Letter No. 06-02****Use of Occasional Short-Term Babysitters by Foster Caregivers**

- This ACL specifies that foster caregivers may use short-term babysitters. Foster caregivers are defined as any licensed or certified foster parent, approved relative caregiver, or approved nonrelative extended family member. The foster caregiver is to use the reasonable and prudent parent standard when engaging a baby sister.
- Short-term is described as no more than 24 consecutive hours. This does not apply to day care providers. Short-term babysitters are exempt from criminal fingerprinting and background checks, CPR certification, and health background checks.
- It specifies examples of activities that may warrant a babysitter, including but not limited to: medical appointments, school appointments, going shopping, and evening out, etc.

- It requires the caregiver to give the babysitter information about the child's emotional, behavioral, medical, or physical conditions, if any, necessary to provide care for the child during the time the foster child is being supervised by the babysitter; any medications needed during the time the child is being watched by the babysitter; and emergency contact information for the babysitter.
- If a complaint is received that the babysitter failed to receive the required information, county licensing (or designate) will determine the circumstances why the information was not transmitted to the babysitter. There is additional information on working with licensed vs. approved providers who have not given the babysitter the required information. CDSS will continue to apprise the county of developments in this area.

**All-County Information Notice No. I-80-05**  
**Telephone Access Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care**

The purpose of this All-County Information Notice (ACIN) is to clarify the issue of telephone access for children and youth in out-of-home care.

Foster care providers may not prohibit or restrict telephone calls to the following: authorized representatives, placement agencies, family members not excluded by court order, social workers, attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), probation officers, the Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services, or the State Foster Care Ombudsman.

Limitations on telephone calls to other individuals and agencies may be based on reasonable disciplinary measures, house rules, consideration of the rights of others, case service plan requirements, documented unpaid reimbursement for long distance telephone calls, or court order prohibitions.

To ensure the confidentiality of telephone calls, foster care providers should provide an area away from other youth and staff that will afford privacy.

There is further information with regard to "call lists," reimbursement of long distance calls and placement agency responsibilities.

## TRAINING ACTIVITY FOR SEGMENT 2 WHAT ARE REASONABLE & PRUDENT DECISIONS?

**Approximate time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:**

- Handout Four: *The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard: What are Reasonable Decisions?*

**Training Activity:**

- Provide trainees with the above listed handout.
- Ask participants to review the potential situations and discuss which decisions are:
  - Red – This is not a reasonable decision to be made by out of home caregivers. The child welfare worker is to be consulted in all these situations.
  - Yellow – This is a decision that may require discussion with the child welfare worker.
  - Green – This is a decision that falls within the reasonable and prudent standard and does not require consultation with the child welfare worker.
- You may either do this in groups of 2 or 3, or as a large group, depending on if you have time.
- When they have finished the scenarios, review them using the Trainer’s/Facilitator’s Key to guide the discussion.

**Processing This Activity:**

- The supervisor/trainer will utilize the exercise “What are Reasonable Decisions” as a way to uncover inconsistencies in practice within the unit and to clarify expectations.
- Under the statute (AB 408 and SB 358), the caregiver is empowered to decide what activities foster youth may participate in and to select occasional, short-term babysitters. It is important to note social workers may collaborate and assist the caregivers in the decisions that they make as prudent parents, but do not monitor caregivers in making reasonable prudent parent decisions.
- Each agency may have some slight variation of the “green” and “yellow.” The discussion within the units and agency as a whole will clarify the standard for the caregivers. This is to be expected, since the standard is not defined precisely by law. Be sure that you are clear on your agency’s general interpretation of the standard. It is also vital to think about your own views and biases about what is reasonable and prudent.
- Additionally, barriers to implementation may be raised and these can be forwarded to the manager for clarification and response.
- Below are suggested answers to the handout.

*End of Activity*

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**HANDOUT FOUR:**  
**The Prudent Parent Standard: What are Reasonable Decisions?**  
**Trainer/Facilitator Key**

**Introduction:** Under the statute (AB 408 and SB 358), the caregiver is empowered to decide what activities foster youth may participate in and to select occasional, short-term babysitters. It is important to note social workers may collaborate and assist the caregivers in the decisions that they make as prudent parents, but do not monitor caregivers in making reasonable prudent parent decisions. The scenarios below offer points of discussion for caregivers, social workers and supervisors.

Review the caregiver scenarios and rate the following scenarios on what is:

**Red** – This is not a reasonable decision to be made by out of home caregivers and does not fall within the reasonable and prudent parent standard.

**Yellow** – This is a decision that should be discussed with the child welfare worker.

**Green** – Falls within the reasonable and prudent standard.

1. A foster parent would like to get a babysitter because the foster parent wants to go out to a concert. The foster parent contacts his sister and asks if she would babysit two foster children, ages 6 and 4. The foster children have been in the home for six months and have some difficulty getting to sleep in the evenings.

**Green** –The foster parent has authority to make a prudent parent decision about whether his sister is appropriate to babysit his foster children without agency oversight. The foster parent is to **make an effort** to leave information about the children’s’ emotional, behavioral, medical, or physical conditions, if any, necessary to care for the children while he is at the concert. In this situation, the foster parent may decide that the children’s difficulty going to sleep is important behavioral information to pass on to the babysitter. The foster parent must also make an effort to leave emergency contact information that is valid during the time he is gone, and any medication that should be given to the children while he is away at the concert.

2. A 16-year-old in a group home would like to attend a one-day ski class with his high school. The trip requires a permission slip be signed. The 16-year-old has been in the group home for three months and has been doing well.

**Red** – Group homes do not fall within the prudent parent standard. Check with your current agency practice about a group home signing permission slips. Consider if the agency child welfare worker can sign.

3. A relative/kin caregiver would like to take a three-day trip with his niece, age 2, and nephew, 4, who have been placed with them by the court, along with their own child, age 10, to Disneyland.

**Green** – Meets the reasonable and prudent parent standard as long as children do not have developmental/physical/behavioral problems that preclude the niece and nephew from going.

4. A 15-year-old would like to call her friend that is across town. It is a long distance call and the foster mother won't allow any long distance calls.

**Red** – This hypothetical does not fall within the prudent parent standard law. However, it **does**, under current CCL regulations state foster and kinship parents can put reasonable restrictions on the use of the telephone in their home. Dependent children have a right to make and receive confidential telephone calls and receive unopened mail unless a court order says they can't. Caregivers can ask for reimbursement for long distance telephone calls and can decide not to allow the child to keep making long distance calls if previous long distance bills have not been paid. Caregivers have authority to make sure that the child's use of the telephone does not infringe on the rights of others and does not tie up the telephone during emergencies.

5. A child's attorney calls the child welfare worker to complain that a foster family should have gotten the court's permission to allow a 10-year-old to participate in skateboarding tournaments. The foster family has two other children ages 7, 9, besides the 10- year-old. All of the children ride skateboards.

**Green** –The activity has its risks, but if developmentally appropriate, falls within the reasonable and prudent parent standard of decisions on extracurricular

activities. The child welfare worker may want to work with the attorney around the reasonable and prudent parent standard. The attorney for the child should be referred to WIC section 362.04 and 362.05.

6. Foster parents go on a getaway weekend and leave two foster children, ages 12 and 15, with the foster aunt and uncle and their children.

**Red** – Currently the standard is for no more than 24 consecutive hours. In order for this to be permissible, the foster aunt and uncle would have to have appropriate clearances.

7. A relative hires an evening babysitter for two foster children, ages 4 and 9. The relative does not disclose that these children are foster children, in order to avoid stigmatizing them.

**Red** – The foster parent must leave specific information with the babysitter under the law. The information is:

- Information about the child's emotional, behavioral, medical or physical condition, if any, necessary to provide care for the child during the time the child is being supervised by the babysitter.
- Any medication that must be given to the child during the time the child is being supervised by the babysitter.
- Emergency contact information that is valid during the time the child is being supervised by the babysitter.

There is no explicit requirement that the babysitter be told the child is a foster child. Also, the caregiver should not disclose more information than necessary to the babysitter. For example, the caregiver should not give the babysitter the child's entire Health and Education Passport.

8. A report comes into the hotline that a daycare provider has hired a babysitter to watch the children in daycare while the daycare provider attends a medical appointment.

**Red** – The reasonable and prudent parent standard does not apply to day care providers.

9. A 17-year-old in foster care would like to get a work permit.

**Green- Yellow** – If the 17-year-old is capable developmentally the caregiver can sign for a work permit.

10. A foster parent asks her 17-year-old daughter to watch her foster children, ages 4 and 8, for 90 minutes so that she can get her hair done. The daughter knows about the children and their behavior and knows how to reach the foster mother in an emergency.

**Green- Yellow** – The age of the babysitter is not defined in the ACL. This may need clarification from the agency to caregivers. Developmentally, unless otherwise indicated, 17-year-olds are expected to take on care giving tasks in preparation for adulthood.

## TRAINING ACTIVITY FOR SEGMENT 3 CURRENT PRACTICE AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED

**Approximate time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:**

- Handout Five: *Action Plan for Changing Practice*

**Training Activity:**

- Provide trainees with the above listed handout.
- Put the day's date in at the top of the handout.
- This is an opportunity for the child welfare workers to identify all of the stakeholders related to their caseload who need to know the information. They can also strategize about how the stakeholders will get the information and brainstorm potential problems.
- When the action plan is complete, put at the bottom of the page a date that is six weeks out from the day's date. One option would be to review the action plan in six weeks (or at the next regularly scheduled meeting) and evaluate how the practice of the reasonable and prudent parent standard is going among various stakeholders.
- Additional action planning may be warranted when you review them.

**Processing This Activity:**

- An option may be to prioritize who needs to know what by when, or focus on how to handle problems/concerns as the application of the reasonable and prudent parent standard is implemented.
- Be sure to include how the caregiver handout sheets are to be distributed, by whom and when.

*End of Activity*

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