



What is Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)?

The Quality Parenting Initiative, a strategy of the Youth Law Center, is an approach to strengthening foster care, refocusing on excellent parenting for all children in the child welfare system. It was launched in 2008 in Florida, and as of 2018, over 75 jurisdictions in 10 states (California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin) have adopted the QPI approach.

In order to thrive, all children and youth need excellent parenting. When parents can't care for their children, the foster or relative family must be able to provide the loving, committed, skilled care that the child needs, in partnership with the system, to ensure children and youth thrive. Both the caregiver's parenting skills and the system's policies and practices should be based on child development research, information and tools. QPI is based on five core principles:

1. Excellent parenting is the most important service we can provide to children and youth in care. Children need families, not beds;
2. Child development and trauma research indicates that children need constant, consistent, effective parenting to grow and reach their full potential;
3. Each community must define excellent parenting for itself;
4. Policy and practice must be changed to align with that definition; and
5. Participants in the system are in the best position to recommend and implement that change.

QPI is an approach, a philosophy and a network of sites that share information and ideas about how to improve parenting as well as recruit and retain excellent families. It is an effort to rebrand foster care, not simply by changing a logo or an advertisement, but by changing the expectations of and support for caregivers. The child welfare system commits to fully supporting excellent parenting by putting the needs of the child first. The key elements of the approach are:

1. Defining the expectations of caregivers,
2. Clearly communicating expectations (the Brand Statement) to staff, caregivers and other stakeholders, and
3. Aligning system policy and practice with those expectations.

When QPI is successful, caregivers have a voice. They work as a team with agency staff to support children and youth. Caregivers receive the support and training they need to work with children and families, understand what is expected of them, and know what to expect from the system. Systems are then able to select and retain enough excellent caregivers to meet the needs of each child for a home and family. When these changes are accomplished, outcomes for children, youth and families will improve.

For additional information, visit the QPI Florida website: <http://www.qpiflorida.org>



Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care

All of us are responsible for the well being of children in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The children's caregivers along with the Florida Department of Children and Families, community-based care (CBC) organizations, their subcontractors and staffs of these agencies undertake this responsibility in partnership, aware that none of us can succeed by ourselves.

Children need normal childhoods as well as loving and skillful parenting which honors their loyalty to their biological family. The purpose of this document is to articulate a common understanding of the values, principles and relationships necessary to fulfill this responsibility. The following commitments are embraced by all of us. This document in no way substitutes for or waives statutes or rule; however, we will attempt to apply these laws and regulations in a manner consistent with these commitments.

1. To ensure that the care we give our children supports their healthy development and gives them the best possible opportunity for success, caregivers and DCF, CBC and agency staff will work together in a respectful partnership.
2. All members of this partnership will behave professionally, will share all relevant information promptly, and will respect the confidentiality of all information related to the child and his or her family.
3. Caregivers, the family, DCF, CBC and agency staff will participate in developing the plan for the child and family, and all members of the team will work together to implement this plan. This includes caregiver participation in all team meetings or court hearings related to the child's care and future plans. DCF, CBC and agency staff will support and facilitate caregiver participation through timely notification, an inclusive process and providing alternative methods for participation for caregivers who cannot be physically present.
4. Excellent parenting is a reasonable expectation of caregivers. Caregivers will provide and DCF, CBC and agency staff will support excellent parenting. This requires a loving commitment to the child and the child's safety and well being, appropriate supervision and positive methods of discipline, encouragement of the child's strengths, respect for the child's individuality and likes and dislikes, providing opportunities to develop the child's interests and skills, awareness of the impact of trauma on behavior, equal participation of the child in family life, involvement of the child with the community and a commitment to enable the child to lead a normal life.
5. Children will be placed only with caregivers who have the ability and are willing to accept responsibility for the care of a child in light of the child's culture, religion and ethnicity, special physical or psychological needs, unique situation including sexual orientation and family relationships. DCF, CBC and agency staff will provide caregivers with all available information to assist them in determining whether they are able to appropriately care for a child. Caregivers must be willing and able to learn about and be respectful of the child's religion, culture and ethnicity, and any special circumstances affecting the child's care. DCF, CBC and agency staff will assist them in gaining the support, training and skills necessary for the care of the child.
6. Caregivers will have access to and take advantage of all training they need to improve their skills in parenting children who have experienced trauma due to neglect, abuse or separation from home, to meet these children's special needs and to work effectively with child welfare agencies, the courts, the schools and other community and governmental agencies.

7. DCF, CBC and agency staff will provide caregivers with the services and support they need to enable them to provide quality care for the child.
8. Once a family accepts the responsibility of caring for the child, the child will be removed from that family only when the family is clearly unable to care for him or her safely or legally, when the child and his or her biological family are reunified, when the child is being placed in a legally permanent home in accordance with the case plan or court order, or when the removal is demonstrably in the child's best interest.
9. If a child must leave the caregiver's home for one of these reasons and in the absence of an unforeseeable emergency, the transition will be accomplished according to a plan which involves cooperation and sharing of information among all persons involved, respects the child's developmental stage and psychological needs, ensures they have all their belongings, and allows for a gradual transition from the caregiver's home and, if possible, for continued contact with the caregiver after the child leaves.
10. When the plan for the child includes reunification, caregivers and agency staff will work together to assist the biological parents in improving their ability to care for and protect their children and to provide continuity for the child.
11. Caregivers will respect and support the child's ties to his or her biological family (parents, siblings and extended family members) and will assist the child in visitation and other forms of communication. DCF, CBC and agency staff will provide caregivers with the information, guidance, training and support necessary for fulfilling this responsibility.
12. Caregivers will work in partnership with DCF, CBC and agency staff to obtain and maintain records that are important to the child's well being including child resource records, medical records, school records, photographs, and records of special events and achievements.
13. Caregivers will effectively advocate for children in their care with the child welfare system, the court, and community agencies, including schools, child care, health and mental health providers, and employers. DCF, CBC and agency staff will support them in doing so and will not retaliate against them as a result of this advocacy.
14. Caregivers will participate fully in the child's medical, psychological and dental care as they would for their biological child. Agency staff will support and facilitate this participation. Caregivers, DCF, CBC and agency staff will share information with each other about the child's health and well being.
15. Caregivers will support the child's school success by participating in school activities and meetings, including IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings, assisting with school assignments, supporting tutoring programs, meeting with teachers and working with an educational surrogate if one has been appointed and encouraging the child's participation in extra-curricular activities. Agency staff will facilitate this participation and will be kept informed of the child's progress and needs.

Signature of Out-of-Home Caregiver

Signature of Representative of Supervising Agency

Note: Signatures are requirements of F.A.C. 65C-13.030(1)(e).

Chapter 6

NORMALCY

6-1. Purpose. This chapter describes the Department's policies and procedures regarding the concept of normalcy. It is the policy of the Department of Children and Families to fully support the efforts of caregivers, providers, and Community Based Care (CBC) lead agencies to ensure that children in our care have the opportunity to fully participate in activities in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

6-2. Scope. The policies and procedures within this operating procedure apply to all staff of the Department, CBC lead agencies and subcontracted providers involved with children in out-of-home care of all ages. This includes child protective investigators, case managers, Children's Legal Services attorneys, foster families, child caring agency staff, relatives, nonrelatives and Department program specialists. Local policies must not be more restrictive than the policies and procedures outlined in this chapter.

6-3. Authority. The following provide the legal authority for the purpose and scope.

- a. Section [409.145](#), Florida Statutes (F.S.).
- b. Section [39.4091](#), F.S.
- c. Section [409.1454](#), F.S.
- d. Chapter [65C-28](#), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

6-4. Explanation of Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. In accordance with s. [39.4091](#), F.S., "reasonable and prudent parent standard" means the standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the child's health, safety, and best interests while at the same time encouraging the child's emotional and developmental growth, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in out-of-home care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities.

6-5. Normalcy Overview.

- a. A child's right to live a healthy, normal childhood is paramount.
- b. A reasonable and prudent parent standard will be applied to decisions regarding a child's participation in normal childhood activities.
- c. Out-of-home caregivers shall be supported in their decision making.
- d. Normalcy focuses on enabling opportunities for social development, recreation, academic growth and positive life experiences, based on a child's desires and developmental, emotional, physical and other needs. Caregivers are empowered to make decisions using a reasonable and prudent parent standard. Guidelines aimed at also increasing normalcy for caregivers are addressed in Chapters 7 and 8 of this operating procedure.
- e. Decisions shall not contradict any existing court order.
- f. While caregivers have authority to make decisions about the normal activities of foster children in their care, the caregiver needs to consider known parental wishes in these decisions.

g. The assigned child welfare professional will make diligent efforts to keep the parent(s) informed and involved, including the resolution of differences between the caregiver and parent.

6-6. Overnight / Planned Activities and Outings.

a. The out-of-home caregiver must determine that the activity or outing is safe and appropriate in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard.

b. Children shall be encouraged to participate in normal school, community or social activities and outings, such as employment, school field trips, dating, scout camping trips, and activities with friends, school, and church groups as appropriate for the child based upon a reasonable and prudent parent standard.

c. Background screening is not required for the child's participation in normal childhood activities and outings, like sleepovers with friends, participation in school lock-in's, or team sports.

d. The caregiver may take children placed in their care on vacations and must inform the assigned child welfare professional in advance of the travel. Travel must be in accordance with any existing court orders.

e. The caregiver shall notify the assigned child welfare professional in advance of overnight stays exceeding three (3) nights. Examples of such stays include sleep away camps and school trips.

f. The assigned child welfare professional shall make efforts to accommodate planned activities for the child's participation by assisting in coordination with the family and court, particularly as related to scheduled visitation.

NOTE: See also Chapter 7 ("Babysitting and Overnight Care") and Chapter 8 ("Out of Town Travel / Vacation") of this operating procedure.

6-7. Social Media / Computer Usage / Cell Phones.

a. Children are permitted to participate in social media, computer usage, and have a cell phone as long as permission has been given by the caregiver.

b. Caregivers shall apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard to decision-making regarding social media usage. Caregivers should be sensitive to the risks of the various forms of social media.

c. Children have the right to self-disclose information about themselves on social media. Caregivers should educate children regarding the potential impact and ramifications of such disclosure.

d. Caregivers are permitted to post pictures on social media including children placed in their care. Caregivers may not use the child's last name or identify the child as residing in out-of-home care.

6-8. Driving.

a. Caregivers and child welfare professionals shall assist children in finding a driver's education program.

b. Support of the child's efforts to learn to drive a car, obtain a learner's permit, and driver's license shall be based upon the child's age, maturity, and access to insurance.

c. The Keys to Independence program is available to assist caregivers, youth and child welfare professionals to maximize children's access to learners' permits, driving education and drivers' licenses.



**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES
CHILDREN'S LEGAL SERVICES
CARETAKER INPUT FORM**

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____

Child's Current Location: _____

Child's Caretaker: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

To:

You are being asked for your input because a judicial review is being held for a child or children placed in your home. It is important that the Department and the Court make informed decisions regarding the children's best interest. This form will be filed with the court as an attachment to the Judicial Review Social Study Report/Case Plan Update.

COMMENTS:

What information should the Court consider in determining the action to take in this case?

Caretaker's Signature

Date



Series: 100
Policy Name: Transition Planning for Children in Out of Home Care
Policy Number: 146
Origination Date: 9/1/2017 **Revision Date:** NA
Regulation: 65C-28.005, FL409.145 (2)(c)
Policy: Communities Connect for Kids recognizes that thoughtful transitions are critical for the child's best interest and foster parent retention.

Procedure:

Once a caregiver accepts the responsibility of caring for a child, the child will be removed from the home of that caregiver only if:

- a. The caregiver is clearly unable to safely or legally care for the child;
- b. The child and his or her biological family are reunified;
- c. The child is being placed in a legally permanent home pursuant to the case plan or a court order;
- d. The removal is demonstrably in the child's best interest; (group to foster home, to place siblings together, etc.) or
- e. The caregiver provides a 30 day removal request of the child.

Emergency Situations:

In emergency situations, a change of placement can be made immediately.

The child welfare professional shall within 72 hours inform the child's parents, unless contrary to court order, Children's Legal Services and guardian ad litem and child's attorney, if appointed, of the move and the reasons an emergency placement change was necessary.

Non -Emergency Situations:

- 1. The child's parents, unless contrary to court order, licensed out-of-home caregivers and the guardian ad litem or attorney ad litem, if appointed, shall be given at least two (2) weeks notice prior to moving a child from one out-of-home placement to another and the reason



a placement change is necessary.

The placement change transition must be accomplished according to a plan that involves cooperation and sharing of information among all persons involved (all caregivers, parents, case management, GAL) respects the child's developmental stage and psychological needs, ensures the child has all of his or her belongings, allows for a gradual transition from the caregiver's home, (when appropriate and possible) and for continued contact with the caregiver after the child leaves.

- a) Parental notification of any placement changes shall be documented in FSFN, unless the court previously excused the Department from further efforts to locate.
 - b) If the parent(s) is unable to be located, efforts to locate and notify the parent shall be documented in FSFN.
2. The child welfare professional shall prepare the child for a move and support the child during the re-placement process.
 3. The child welfare professional shall provide supportive services to the caregiver where the child is residing to avoid a change in placement when possible. When a placement is in danger of disrupting, the child welfare professional shall urge the caregiver to wait to request removal of the child until efforts can be made to remedy the reasons for the child's instability. When efforts to stabilize a placement have not been successful or there are circumstances that preclude the child's continued stay, the child welfare professional will work with the caregiver to reach agreement on a move date that takes into consideration the following needs of the child:
 - a) There is a break in the school year;
 - b) An alternative placement can be located; and,
 - c) Arrangements for the child's transition to the new setting can be made and implemented.
 4. The caregiver at the new placement shall be prepared and informed prior to placement of the child and shall be given needed support to help the child transition and achieve stability. Out-of-home caregivers shall be given all relevant information about the child in their care while maintaining confidentiality requirements. Specifically, the child welfare professional shall:
 - a) Inform the caregiver of all identified needs of the child;
 - b) Discuss any training the caregiver may need to care for the child, including any special needs of the child and possible reactions to the specific trauma that the child has experienced;



- c) Discuss any services that the child may need and the role of the out-of-home caregiver with regard to transportation, participation in treatment sessions, communication with treatment provider(s) and potential implementation of treatment recommendations in the home;
- d) Inform the out-of-home caregiver about available programs that may provide financial and medical assistance for the child;
- e) Provide the out-of-home caregiver with counseling and information regarding the dependency process and support services available in the community;
- f) Review with the licensed out-of-home caregivers their roles and responsibilities according to the "Partnership Plan for Children in Licensed Out-of-Home Care," incorporated in paragraph 65C-28.004(6)(c), F.A.C., available here: <http://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-06689>, (see attachment). The child welfare professional shall sign a copy of the Partnership Plan and obtain a signature of the licensed out-of-home caregiver, attesting acknowledgment of the requirements at time of placement; and,
- g) Provide to the out-of-home caregiver the Child's Resource Record. The Child's Resource Record from the previous placement(s) shall be reviewed with the out-of-home caregiver upon the child's new placement. The child welfare professional shall discuss with the out-of-home caregiver the caregivers' role in maintaining and updating the Child's Resource Record.

It is at the discretion of the CCKids CEO to approve any transitions outside the above parameters.

Approved by:

Carol DeLoach

Carol DeLoach, CEO

Date: 10-10-18

Caregiver Support Program Team

Jill Poole	Jerra Nicol Wisecup	Caitlin Wescoe
Caregiver and Adoption Support Supervisor jill.poole@cckids.net Office: 772-617-1687 Cell: 772-528-0365	Licensing and Quality Parenting Initiative Specialist jerra.wisecup@cckids.net Office: 772-249-3188 Cell: 772-618-5474	Caregiver and Post-Adoption Specialist caitlin.wescoe@cckids.net Office: 772-324-3130 Cell: 772-323-4181

Relative and Nonrelative Support

ISSUING CAREGIVER SUPPORT FUNDS FOR CAREGIVERS
 COMING SOON...SUPPORT

Post Adoption Support

ONE YEAR FOLLOW UP CALLS
 COLLABORATING WITH DCF FOR POST ADOPTION INTAKES
 LINKING ADOPTIVE FAMILIES TO SERVICES

Licensing

ISSUING INITIAL CLOTHING VOUCHERS
 ISSUING CAREGIVER SUPPORT FUNDS FOR FOSTER PARENTS
 DISRUPTION PREVENTION
 AGENCY/CAREGIVER LIASON

Quality Parenting Initiative

CAREGIVER RETENTION THROUGH WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP
 SUPPORTING CO PARENTING EFFORTS
 REINFORCING NORMALCY

Foster Parent Mentors

SUPPORT FROM SEASONED FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Sibling Separation

PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN PLACED SEPARATELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTION

