Policy Subject:	Guidelines for Foster Care Board Rate and Expenditures
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Approved By:	Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW Executive Director Social Services Administration (SSA) Stafford Chipungu, Chief Financial Officer Budget Management and Finance
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Program Affected:	Placement and Permanency

Legal information & Purpose

Resource parents are partners with the Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) in providing appropriate care for children in need of safe and stable homes. Resource parents supply daily essentials that are required for the attainment of optimum health, comfort, and good grooming of children and youth in care. The board rate is set by the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) and applies to public resource parents. As a result of the Supplemental Budget No. 1 to House Bill 150/Senate Bill 170 in the form of an amendment to the budget for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2018, resource parents were allotted a 2% increase in Foster Care Maintenance Payments intended to augment the board rate and per diem for the purpose of meeting the needs of children and youth in out-of-home placement. In the FY19 DHS Budget Analysis, the Department of Budget and Management approved a 1% increase to public foster care board rates. A one-time adjustment payment will be processed on December 27, 2018 (via MD CHESSIE adjustment process) for public resource parents who had children in placement July 2018-Nov 2018. The 1% increased rate for public resource parents will then be part of the monthly board payment beginning in January 2019 and beyond.

Private Child Care Placement Agency (CPA) which include residential child care (RCC), group home providers and treatment foster care providers, submit an annual budget to the DHS Office of Licensing and Monitoring (OLM) and the Maryland Interagency Rate Committee (IRC) which outlines the cost for all services provided for each child in a privately run program. Private agencies are provided sufficient funds within their monthly payment amount to cover the approved clothing allowance for children in their programs and are not eligible to receive additional clothing allowance funds from the LDSS.

Policy

The purpose of this policy directive is to provide detailed guidelines for resource parents (regular, intermediate, public and private treatment resource parents and group home providers) to utilize the monthly board rate payment which is paid on behalf of foster youth. In addition, this policy directive includes specific requirements for the distribution of the clothing allowance and the weekly monetary allowance which meets the basic needs of children and youth in out-of-home placement.

Procedural Guidance

Board Rate:

Per COMAR 07.02.11.39, the monthly board rate is to be used to provide care for foster children and youth. The following items are to be covered in the monthly board rate:

- Food (including infant formula);
- Housing;
- Utilities used by the foster youth in the home;
- Over-the-counter medication;
- Transportation and bus pass for older youth; please note: (long distance travel specific to the foster youth is not included in the monthly board rate)
- Fees required for extracurricular activities (school trips, etc.)
- Bedding (pillow, sheets, comforter)
- Gifts for special occasions (birthday and Christmas, etc.)

- Toiletry and personal care items (hair care, styling, feminine hygiene products and diapers); and
- Allowance.

Mileage:
Per COMAR 07.02.11.31 it is expected that resource parents provide transportation for a foster child or youth for routine and necessary appointments and activities. This would include all medical and mental health appointments, school activities, visitation and other extracurricular activities. When a public resource parent must provide special long distance trips (**30 miles plus**) on behalf of a foster child, the resource parent can request reimbursement from the LDSS. These activities would include:

- Parent or relative visitation;
- Sibling visitation;
- Medical or mental health appointments; and
- Special school or extracurricular events.

Clothing Allowance
The LDSS is required to visit the child in the placement on a regular basis. These in-placement visitations shall include a clothing and personal care items review and inspection. Many resource parents go above and beyond the clothing allowance in providing for the clothing and personal care needs of the child. While they are under no obligation to utilize the other portion of the monthly board rate in this manner, they should be commended for prioritizing the direct needs of the child in utilizing monetary support provided by the agency.

It is expected that, at minimum, the identified clothing allowance be used to provide the child with clothing and personal care items. Clothing allowances are set as a standardized portion of the monthly board rate issued to public resource parents so that they may provide for the garments and personal care items required for each child. In addition, to the monthly board rate, there is also an initial **one-time** clothing allowance, categorized by the age of the child, which is available at the time of the initial entry into placement and upon removals. There may be special circumstances such as graduation, proms or medically-related circumstances when special planning or even further assistance may be warranted and flex funds may be expended for these situations.

Because children are often placed into placement on an emergency basis, shelter care may occur in the middle of the night. Often times, the sheltering occurs with the child having no more than the clothing they are wearing. The one-time allowance provides a means to help the resource parent supply immediate clothing and personal care items for the child. In addition, if needed, the LDSS may utilize flex funds to purchase immediate clothing for the child. All resource parents are eligible for a one-time only clothing allowance per placement.

When DHS is providing a foster care board rate, including if an IRC rate is a blended mother-baby rate, on behalf of a non-committed baby placed with their parent who is a committed foster care youth, all the requirements listed below apply as to the care and support of the baby.

If the child is placed in a Residential Treatment Center (RTC), the RTC may bill the LDSS for a

monthly clothing allowance not to exceed $75. The caseworker must ensure that the funds are expended for this purpose. The LDSS shall not pay a monthly clothing allowance for youth who reside in a RTC pursuant to a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA). It is the parents/guardians responsibility to provide clothing to the youth while in placement. The LDSS shall inform the RTC prior to placement that the LDSS shall not be billed for clothing and that the parent/guardian is responsible for the clothing. Minimum clothing allowance guidelines are as follows:
Infants to age 5 = $60
Ages 6 to 11 = $75
Ages 12 and up = $100
All additional clothing expense is to come out of the monthly board rate.

A suitcase or canvas bag (such as a large duffel bag) to transport clothing is considered an essential part of the things children in foster care should have. Plastic trash bags are not acceptable under any circumstances. The LDSS shall ensure that every child that enters out-of-home placement has a suitcase or duffel bag. This suitcase or bag shall travel with the youth to each placement.

Initial Placement
At the time of initial placement, the caseworker shall provide the resource parent with a copy of the Minimum Clothing and Personal Care Guidelines. The caseworker shall also inform the resource parent that meeting those guidelines will be discussed after a 60 day period.

At the first home visit after the child has been in the placement for at least **60 days**, the caseworker shall review the child's available clothing items to determine if the child's minimum clothing needs have been met.

If it is determined that the minimum clothing needs have not been met, the caseworker in collaboration with the resource parent, shall develop a **90 day** plan to meet the minimum clothing guidelines. It is up to the discretion of the LDSS, to grant the resource parent up to 3 months of clothing allowance, if needed. While the resource parent shall be encouraged to meet these guidelines as soon as possible, consideration shall be given to staying within the monthly clothing allowance.

General Standards

Ownership of Clothing and Personal Items:
Any items that have been purchased by the resource parent (including extended family members), donated or gifted are to remain the property of the youth and shall travel with the youth when a change in placement occurs. At no time shall a resource parent hold items belonging to the foster youth in exchange for damages. Any damages caused by the foster youth shall be reported to the caseworker and when applicable, a Foster Care Liability Insurance claim should be filed. In the event of a placement change, the caseworker shall make every effort to move all items belonging to the youth.

Multiple Placement Changes:
Should a youth experience multiple changes in placement, all belongings are to travel

with the youth to each placement. All decisions concerning whether clothing and personal items should be discarded is left up to the discretion of the youth. At no time, shall a caseworker not allow a youth to bring all their belongings with them. In the hospitalized or a respite care placement, the youth's belongings shall remain at the placement, pending the child's return. In the event the resource parent is not willing to take the youth back after a hospitalization or respite, the LDSS caseworker shall make arrangements to store the youth's belongings appropriately.

Clothing Storage by the Resource Parent:
Resource parents are required to supply the furniture and sleeping arrangements for foster youth. Appropriate space for the youth to store clothing is required. At no time may the youth store clothing worn on a regular basis in suitcases, laundry baskets or plastic containers.

Hand Me Downs or Thrift Shop Items are Discouraged:
Resource parents are discouraged from purchasing a foster youth's clothing from thrift shops or providing hand-me-down clothing. The Monthly Clothing Allowance which is part of the monthly board rate is to be used to purchase new items of clothing for the youth. In the event that a resource parent purchases a used item of clothing, the foster youth, must be in agreement and the item must be in good condition. All personal items shall be purchased new for the foster youth and not shared by other members of the household or placement, again unless the youth is in agreement.

All children shall be allowed to assist in picking out their own clothing, when age/developmentally appropriate.
Older youth should be primarily responsible for the management and purchase of clothing and personal care items as part of their independent living service agreement. All youth should be permitted to select clothing that meets their own specific needs or ethnic or religious requirements, including pregnant youth and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning youth.

Spending Money / Allowances / Savings
Each child/youth shall be given a minimum weekly allowance based on their age.

Age 5 to 7 = $2
Age 8 to 11 = $5
Age 12 to 13 = $10
Age 14 to 16 = $15
Age 17 and above = $20

These amounts are minimum guidelines and may be increased depending on the children or youth's maturity, circumstances, and participation in household chore activities. The caseworker shall be consulted as to the appropriate allowance amount.

Allowances are not intended to cover items that would normally come out of the board rate such as toiletries. Resource parents are encouraged to establish savings accounts for children and youth. Monies in the accounts will accompany the child or youth upon their return home or to

another placement. Youth that are medically fragile or severely developmentally delayed shall still receive an allowance and the money shall be placed in a savings account.

Resource parents are encouraged to assist the child or youth with the purchasing of special occasion gifts for their foster family and birth family, e.g. Mother's/Father's Day, religious holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions.

Resource parents shall assist the child or youth with developing money management skills. This shall be essential for transitioning youth 14-21 years old. The child or youth's allowance shall be incorporated into the youth's spending plan. The spending plan is part of the transitional plan which will be incorporated into the Independent Living Service Agreement. The Casey Life Skills Assessment addresses budgeting and savings using the following goals:

- Is able to keep track of a weekly allowance;
- Knows and understands ways to save money;
- Is able to develop a savings plan;
- Can achieve a short-term savings goal; and
- Can achieve a long-term savings goal to help in the transition to self-sufficiency/self-responsibility.

Foster Family Care FY 2019 Monthly Board Rate

	Per Diem	Monthly Clothing	Monthly Board
Regular Care (Payment Category 2173, 7173) o Infant through age 11 o Age 12 and older	 $28.29 $28.79	 $60 $75	 $861 $876
Restricted- Relative Foster Care (Payment Category 2173,7173) o Infant through age 11 o Age 12 and older	 $28.29 $28.79	 $60 $75	 $861 $876
Emergency Care (Payment Category 2171, 7171) o Per Diem o Retainer (if applicable, rate to be determined)	$30.91		$30.91
Guardianship Assistance Program (Category 2173,7173) negotiated based on agreement	$19.82	$0	$603
Respite Care (Payment Categories 7157 - Foster Care and 7158 -Kinship Care)	$30.60		$30.60
Intermediate Care (Payment Category 2174, 7174) o Infant through age 11 o Age 12 and older	 $32.18 $32.67	 $60 $75	 $979 $994

Intermediate Difficulty of Care Stipend o Infant through age 11 o Age 12 and older	$38.75 $39.25	$60 $75	$1,179 $1,194
Public Treatment Foster Care (Specialized Care) (Payment Category 2175, 7175) o Infant through age 11 o Age 12 and older	$28.29 $28.79		$861 $876

Public TFC Level I (maintenance plus) $350.00

Public TFC Level II (maintenance plus) $500.00

Public TFC Level III (maintenance plus) $650.00

Public TFC Level IV (maintenance plus) $800.00

Please note: The monthly clothing allowance is built into the monthly board rate, as is indicated in the **Foster Family Care FY 2019 Monthly Board Rate** chart. The **Foster Family Care FY 2019 Monthly Board Rate** chart reflects the minimum amount that resource parents shall spend monthly, when providing clothing for foster children/youth.

Minimum Clothing and Personal Care Guidelines

BOYS	GIRLS
8 sets of underwear	8 undergarments: 4 bras (as needed) and 8 underwear
5 pairs of school pants or uniforms	2 dresses / 5 pairs pants for school or uniforms
5 sets of play clothes	3 sets of play clothes
1 pair dress pants, shirt, (tie if age applicable) & belt	1 dress or pants outfit suitable for a special event
8 pair of socks	6 blouses, light sweater or tops
6 shirts (not undershirts)	8 pair of socks / stockings as appropriate
1 pair tennis shoes – 1 pair non-canvas/dress shoes – 1 pair of everyday school shoes	1 pair tennis shoes – 1 pair non-canvas/dress shoes - 1 pair of everyday school shoes
2 sets of sleepwear, 1 robe, 1 pair of slippers	2 sets of sleepwear, 1 robe, 1 pair of slippers
1 bathing suit	1 bathing suit

SEASONAL WEAR

1 winter coat	1 Winter coat
1 light weight jacket	1 light weight jacket
1 pair gloves & hat	1 pair gloves & hat

1 pair boots	1 pair boots
Rain gear / coat	Rain gear / coat
Shorts, "T" shirts, sandals	Shorts, "T" shirts, sandals

Minimum Clothing and Equipment Items for Infants Ages Birth to One Year

Equipment	Clothing
2-4 Receiving Blankets	6 - 8 Undershirts
2 Regular Blankets	6– 8 Pajamas / Sleepers
Crib	6 Shirts
4 – 6 Crib Sheets	8 pair socks
1 Stroller	5 Every-day outfits
1 Car seat	2 Dress-up outfits
8 bibs	2 Sweaters
2 rattles and toys to stimulate the infant	1 Hat, scarf and mittens
	1 sun hat
	1 Snow suit
	1 Pair Shoes
	1 Pair winter footwear

Alignment with Practice Model and Desired Outcomes

Maryland's goal is to ensure all children are placed in a safe and nurturing environment. This policy provides guidelines for the foster care board rate and expenditures to support the placement of a child while in care. This policy aligns with the Integrated Practice Model by supporting our partnership with resource parents and ensuring our commitment that the children's needs are met.

Documentation

Board rate documentation
Mileage documentation
Documentation that age appropriate clothing has been provided by resource parent and documented in child's visitation contact note or clothing inventory check list
Spending Money/Allowance/Savings

Forms

n/a

Related Policies and Information

SSA-CW #19-12 Differential Board Rates for Public Foster Care
SSA-CW #18-15 Local Department Referrals to Private Treatment Foster Care Programs
SSA-CW #17-19 Implementation of Families Blossom Funds
SSA –CW #10-11 Policy regarding placement of children in DHS's care
SSA-CW #15-3 Guardianship Assistance Program