

**Department of Human Resources
Social Services Administration
311 W. Saratoga St.
Baltimore, MD 21201**

DATE: April 15, 2011

POLICY DIRECTIVE: SSA# 11-19

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors, Services

FROM: Carnitra D. White, Executive Director 
Social Services Administration

RE: Guidelines for Foster Care Board Rate and Expenditures

PROGRAMS
AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Foster Care Services)
and Resource Units

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Out-of-Home Placement

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments, Private Foster Care Agencies

REQUIRED ACTION: Implement Policy and Procedures

ACTION DUE: Immediate

CONTACT PERSONS: Deborah Ramelmeier
Deputy Executive Director of Programs
410-767-7506

Purpose

This policy directive details the guidelines for foster providers (regular, intermediate, treatment foster parents and group providers) to utilize the monthly board rate payment paid on behalf of foster youth. This policy directive includes specific requirements for the clothing allowance to meet the basic needs of youth and requirements for a weekly allowance for youth.

Background

Foster parents are partners of the Local Departments of Social Services in providing the necessary care for children in need of a safe and stable home. During the 27 hours of pre-service training, foster parents are taught about their responsibilities in meeting the material needs of the children in their care. COMAR 07.02.25.08 states that foster parents are to “provide daily essentials that are required for health, comfort, and good grooming of a child, including proper clothing for the season.” The board rate amount has been increased over the past few years to allow the foster parent to meet the actual costs of providing for the child(ren) in their care. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that it will cost \$7, 560 annually (\$630.00 monthly) to raise a child.

Private foster care agencies (group providers and private treatment foster care agencies) submit an annual budget to the DHR Office of Licensing and Monitoring and the Maryland Interagency Rate Committee which outlines the cost for all services provided for each child in the program including the cost for a clothing allowance. Private agencies provide clothing allowances to their foster parents or youth on either a monthly or quarterly basis. Private agencies are provided sufficient funds within their monthly payment amount as established by the IRC to cover the approved clothing allowance for placements in their programs and are not eligible to receive additional funds for this purpose from the local department.

Clothing allowances are set as a standardized portion of the monthly board rates issued to public foster providers so that they may provide for the garments/personal care items required for each child. The regular monthly foster care rate is expected to provide for the room, board and clothing needs of every child placed with a foster care provider. While Maryland does not continually monitor the spending of the monthly board rate, it is expected that, at minimum, the identified clothing allowance is used to provide the child with clothing and personal care items.

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 removal and placement to assist with meeting the clothing needs of the child upon initial entry into out-of-home placement. This is only available to public resource parents. 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.

When DHR is providing a foster care board rate on behalf of a non-committed minor 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 minor infant.

Monthly Board Rate

Foster parents (including treatment foster parents) and group home providers receive a monthly board rate for the care of the foster youth which is negotiated and established by the Maryland Interagency Rates Committee. Per COMAR, the board rate is to be used to provide care for the foster youth. Included in the monthly board rate are the following:

Food (including infant formula);

Housing;

Utilities used by the foster youth in the home;

Over-the-counter medication;

Transportation (not long distances specific to foster youth) and bus pass for older youth;

Fees required for extracurricular activities (school trips);

Bedding (pillow, sheets, comforter);

Gifts for special occasions (birthday and Christmas);

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

Allowance.

Foster Family Care FY 2011

	Monthly Board	Per Diem	Monthly Clothing	Total
Regular Care (Payment Category 2173, 7173)				
○ Infant through age 11	\$775	\$27.45	\$60	\$835
○ Age 12 and older	\$775	\$27.94	\$75	\$850
Emergency Care (Payment Category 2171, 7171) ○ Per Diem ○ Retainer		\$30		\$30
Respite Care (Payment Categories 7157 (Foster Care) and 7158 (Kinship Care))		\$30		\$30
Intermediate Care (Payment Category 2174, 7174)				
○ Infant through age 11	\$890	\$31.23	\$60	\$950
○ Age 12 and older	\$890	\$31.72	\$75	\$965
Treatment Foster Care (Specialized Care) (Payment Category 2175, 7175)				
○ Infant through age 11	\$775	\$27.45	\$60	\$835
○ Age 12 and older	\$775	\$27.94	\$75	\$850

Clothing Allowance

The local department of social services is required to visit the child in the placement on a regular basis per policy directive SSA# 09-9 Caseworker Visitation with Child in OHP. These in-placement visitations shall include a review by the caseworker of the clothing items available for the child. Many foster 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.

If the child is placed in a Residential Treatment Center, the RTC may bill the local department for a monthly clothing allowance not to exceed \$75. The caseworker must ensure that the funds are expended for this purpose.

A. Entry

The case worker shall conduct an inventory of the child's clothing at the time of entry into Out-of-Home Placement. The case worker shall use the Minimum Clothing and Personal Care Guidelines when completing the inventory. After completing the clothing inventory, the case worker shall communicate with the foster parents on what items of clothing require purchasing. The initial one-time clothing allowance will be used to purchase these items. This one-time allowance is to be used to provide for the immediate clothing needs of the child. Because children are often placed emergently into out-of-home placement, they may be sheltered in the middle of the night with no more than the clothing they are wearing. This one-time allowance provides a means to help the foster parent see to those immediate clothing and care needs of the child. If the child enters care with no clothing, the local departments staff may utilize flex funds to purchase immediate clothing for the child.

Upon a child entering foster care an initial **one time** allowance is given to assist with the purchase of clothing.

- 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.

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

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 local department 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.

Private Foster Care Agencies shall provide initial clothing to youth that are placed through their agency. Private agencies **do not** receive the one time clothing allowance. The local department may use their own discretion to purchase clothing for youth placed in private foster care agencies through the utilization of flex funds.

B. 60 Days in the Placement

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 addressed. If it is determined that minimum clothing needs are not being met, the caseworker shall work with the foster parent to develop a Plan to meet Minimum Clothing Guidelines. The plan covers a 90 day period which gives the foster parent up to 3 months of clothing allowance with which to satisfy the guidelines, if necessary. While the foster parent shall be encouraged to meet these guidelines as soon as possible, consideration shall be given to staying within the monthly clothing allowance.

C. General Standards

- **Child Ownership of Clothing and Personal Items :**
Any item of clothing, personal hygiene or toys/electronics purchased for the foster youth belong to the foster youth. These items may have been purchased by the foster family (including extended family), donated or gifted. Regardless of how the child received the items, they are the property/belongings of the youth and travel with the youth when a change in placement occurs. At no time may a provider hold items belonging to the foster youth in exchange for damages. The case worker when possible shall be equipped to move all items the day the placement changes.
- **Continual Replacement:**
When a foster youth requires continuous replacements, all belongings are to travel with the youth to each placement. At no time, for any reason, shall a case worker not allow a youth to bring all belongings. If the youth has clothing or items that no longer fit or age appropriate it is the youth's discretion whether the items should be discarded.
- **Encouragement of Specified Place for Clothing:**
Foster providers are required to have the necessary furniture and sleeping arrangements for each 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.
- **Discourage Hand Me Downs or Thrift Shop Items for Regular Clothing/Personal Needs:**
Foster providers 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 payment allows the foster parent monies to purchase new items for the youth. A foster provider may purchase a few items of used clothing for the foster youth, but this cannot be the majority of the child's wardrobe. All personal items shall be purchased new for the foster youth and not shared by other members of the household or placement.
- **All children shall be allowed to assist in picking out the clothing, as 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, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning youth.

Spending Money / Allowances / Savings

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

5 to 7 = \$2

8 to 11 = \$5

12 to 13 = \$10

14 to 16 = \$15

17 and above = \$20

These amounts are minimum guidelines and may be increased depending on the child's/youth's maturity, circumstances, and participation in household chore activities. The child's case worker 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. Foster parents are encouraged to establish savings accounts for children and youth. Monies in the accounts will accompany the child /youth upon their return home or to another foster placement.

Foster parents are encouraged to assist the child /youth to purchase special occasion gifts for their foster family and birth family, i.e. Mother's/Father's Day, religious holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions.

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