

In response to the Children’s Administration’s (CA) 2014 Foster Parent Survey, we heard you express many questions about CA policy, practice and how that impacts caring for children placed in your homes. In response CA has developed a “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) that will live on our website. Caregivers will soon be able to search by topic for helpful information related to caring for the children placed in your home and find answers to previously posted questions. Each month, a new set of questions will be posted to help caregivers with questions and answers about caring for a dependent child living in out-of-home care. If you have a question you would like to see included in this project, please forward your information to: Meri Waterhouse, Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Program Manager at: waterml@dshs.wa.gov

Foster Parent Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can we claim our foster child as a dependent?

You may claim your foster or relative child if the child has been placed in your care for more than six (6) months of the tax year. There are special circumstances for an infant born later in the year and placed in foster care. Contact your tax consultant or the DSHS Tax Desk for more information.

(866) 563-8155 Toll free

(360) 664-5830 Local-Olympia

TAXINFO@dshs.wa.gov

2. How do we get our foster child’s social security number for our tax filing?

Request your foster child’s social security number by contacting the child’s assigned worker.

3. Is my mileage to transport foster children to parent visits, doctor appointments and school reimbursable?

Mileage is reimbursable for transporting children to parent or sibling visits, medical, dental, counseling or WIC appointments as well as other needs

specified in the case plan for the child. Regular transportation to and from school is not reimbursable, unless there is a need and plan to maintain the child's educational stability, or to attend school-related extracurricular activities. If you have questions about allowable mileage, review the Caregiver Monthly Mileage form <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/FSA/forms/pdf/07-090.pdf>, or consult with the child's worker.

4. How do I get paid for mileage and where can I get the form to complete?

You can be reimbursed for allowable mileage by completing the Caregiver Monthly Mileage form (*DSHS 07-090 Rev. 1/2015*) and submitting it to the child's worker. A copy of this form is contained in your Caregiver Placement Packet, or you can request one from the child's worker, or you can find it online at: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/FSA/forms/pdf/07-090.pdf>. It helps to make several copies of the form to keep on hand. Submit your mileage to the child's worker each month for timely reimbursement. Per CA administrative policy, mileage submitted **after 90 days** will not be reimbursed.

5. How do I fill out a mileage form?

Review the back of the document for instructions and examples on how to complete the form and information about Child Specific Mileage. The form also provides information on transportation that we do not reimburse. Make sure to complete all areas on the form. If you are unsure about an item, check with the child's worker, or a Foster Parent Liaison. Always keep a copy of your signed form, in case there are questions or if your payment is delayed.

6. What is the mileage reimbursement rate?

Beginning January 2015, the reimbursement rate for mileage is .575 per mile. Periodically the rate will change, based on instructions from the state's Office of

Financial Management (OFM). Watch the Caregiver Connection for notice about changes, or check CA's Foster Parent web page for the current rate.

7. Who do I send my Caregiver Mileage form to when it's complete?

Your completed and signed form should be sent to the child's assigned worker. Always keep a copy of your signed document, should you need it for reference. You can submit this form by postal mail, e-mail, or personally at the office. If you submit the form via e-mail, request the child's worker to send a response to confirm he/she has received it. If you submit the form directly at the office, ask the receptionist to date stamp it and provide you a copy.

8. I haven't received my monthly mileage reimbursement – what should I do?

If you have not received your mileage reimbursement within 30 days, contact your child's assigned worker to confirm they received and processed the form. If you are not able to contact the worker, please ask the receptionist to connect you with the worker's supervisor. Let them know it's been more than 30 days since the worker received the form and you have not yet been reimbursed.

9. How do I learn when the child's court hearing is scheduled?

As a caregiver, you are entitled to know about the date and time of the child's court hearings. Here are some ways you can learn when the court hearing is scheduled:

- When the child is first placed with you, let the assigned worker know you need the court date.
- Ask the assigned worker for the date and time of the next hearing at the child's next Health and Safety visit.
- When you receive a copy of the child's Court Report, check the front page; the date of the next hearing is printed there.

- If you attend the court review hearings, the court sets the date and time for the next review during the hearing.

10. Can I go to court? Why doesn't the judge, worker or attorney acknowledge me there?

Yes, you can attend all court hearings. Let the worker know you plan to attend the hearing. If you want the worker to tell the court you are present, ask the worker in advance to do so. Some caregivers prefer to not have their attendance called out to the court; it is your decision.

11. Why didn't I get invited to the court hearing? Why doesn't my worker tell me that court is coming up?

Workers should always let caregivers know when a child has a scheduled court hearing. Some hearings are procedural; this is a brief court appearance where the judge reviews an administrative requirement, or continues a scheduled review hearing. These hearings are covered by the Department's attorney and even the workers aren't required to appear.

There may have been a change in assigned worker. The new worker may not be aware you haven't been notified. Any time you want to know when the next court hearing is scheduled, please ask the worker or his or her supervisor for that information.

12. Should I attend court? Often I feel like the worker is discouraging me from attending.

Caregivers are encouraged to attend and are welcome at the child's court hearings. Caregivers are entitled to notice of the child's scheduled hearings. Caregivers are usually most interested in the six month reviews and the 12 month permanency hearings. We understand it may not always be possible for

you to attend, due to your work schedule or other caregiving needs. It is also important to know that long wait times are not uncommon at court.

Many of the dependency courts schedule multiple hearings at the same time. The court then decides which hearings will go first. Sometimes there can be a lengthy wait for your foster child's hearing (which may only last about 10 minutes). Sometimes the court continues the child's hearing to another date. Whether you attend the hearing or not, we encourage all caregivers to complete the Caregiver Report to the Court form and provide it to the child's assigned worker about 10 days prior to the hearing, or take it with you for distribution at the Court hearing. Obtain the Caregivers Report to Court here:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/fsa/forms> (enter form # 15-313)

13. Are foster parents required to transport and supervise visits?

No. However, many caregivers prefer to transport their foster child to and from visits. Some foster parents want to help with supervision and that is okay, but foster parents are never required or expected to transport or supervise the visits.

The child's assigned worker and caregiver should establish ongoing communication to discuss the child's visit plan and arrangements, including transportation. This would be a good topic to discuss during the worker's monthly visit. Sometimes visitation plans change. It's helpful to have both the worker and caregiver prepared and ready to support the child, if the visit schedule, location, transporter, or other factors need to change.

14. Why can't a transportation agency transport our foster child to an 'unsupervised' visit?

Based on the negotiated contracts Children's Administration has with these agencies, they only provide transportation to supervised visits.

15. My foster child wants to go to a friend's house. Is it okay?

Under the Prudent Parenting Law and policy, you have the authority to make this decision to allow the child to participate in normal childhood activities. As with your own children, careful and thoughtful parental decisions should be utilized when deciding whether to allow a child should participate or not.

16. Can I take my foster children on vacation?

Under the Prudent Parent Law and policy, you can take your foster child with you on a trip or vacation lasting up to 72 hours without approval by the worker or agency. If you are planning a longer vacation, you will need to obtain approval through the worker. Some vacation plans require court approval, especially if the child will miss scheduled visits with their parent(s) or siblings. Missed visits with the parents will need to be made up. If you are traveling out of state, or out of the country notify the child's worker as soon as you begin your plans to ensure there is adequate time to obtain all necessary approvals and/or court orders. Find the Prudent Parent Guidelines here:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/CA/fos/documents/normalcy.pdf>

17. Where can I get a CA staff phone list?

Go to the CA foster parent web page at: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/foster-parenting>, and look for:

Contact Information

Children's Administration Staff Directories

Click on the hyperlink: **Get contact information for Children's Administration staff**

This will provide you with contact information for our social work staff, supervisors and Area Administrators.

18. Who can I call after the office is closed and on weekends when I have an emergency? What is the Afterhours Foster Parent Support phone number?

Call 1-800-301-1868 if you need support, assistance or help with a child in your care after normal business hours, on weekends or holidays. If you are experiencing an emergency with a child's health, mental health or out of control behaviors that could cause injury to the child or others, DO NOT hesitate to call 911.

19. Who is my child's worker? My old one left and I don't know who the new one is.

Call the local Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) office and ask to speak to a supervisor. Give them the child's name and date of birth, along with the name of the last worker assigned to the child. Here is the link to contact the local offices.

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/foster-parenting/childrens-administration-staff-directories>

20. How often is the child's worker supposed to visit a child?

Children in CA custody must receive private, individual face-to-face Health and Safety visits by the assigned CA worker or other qualified CA worker every calendar month. For children who are in out-of-home placements, the majority of Health and Safety visits must occur in the home where the child resides. If the CA worker visits the child in another location, the CA worker must document the reason and benefit gained.

21. What exactly is influenza?

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and can cause death. Influenza is not a cold. Influenza usually comes on suddenly. People who have Influenza often feel some or all of these symptoms: fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, and fatigue. Most people who get influenza will recover in a few days to two weeks. Some people can develop complications (such as pneumonia) as a result of influenza.

Infants and small children are more vulnerable to influenza and can become seriously ill. They can get pneumonia, bronchiolitis and are more likely to die from the flu.

Anyone can get influenza (even healthy people), and serious problems related to influenza can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.

22. Why should I get a flu shot?

Getting the flu shot makes it less likely that you're going to get the flu, and it makes it less likely that people in your family and community are going to get the flu.

There are many strains of the flu. Sometimes the vaccine doesn't target all of the current strains, but it can protect you from other strains, reduce the chance of hospitalizations and death. Getting vaccinated every year is important to make sure you have immunity to the strains most likely to cause an outbreak.

23. Should I get a flu shot when I'm pregnant?

Yes, not only is it safe, it could save you or your baby's life. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) strongly recommends a flu shot for pregnant women. The flu shot is made with inactivated (killed) virus. Pregnant women should not receive the nasal-spray flu vaccine, which is made with live (weakened) virus.

24. Can I get the flu from the flu shot?

No, it is impossible for the flu vaccine to give you the flu. Flu vaccines contain dead virus, and a dead virus can't infect you. The nasal vaccine contains live virus, but the virus is specially made to remove the parts of the virus that make people sick.

25. Is the “stomach flu” really the flu?

Many people use the term “stomach flu” to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are not caused by the flu. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal illness.

26. I'm really concerned about the mercury contained in the flu vaccine.

Vaccines that come from a single dosage vial contain no added mercury. Shots that come from multiple dose vials do contain a trace of chemical preservative but the amount is inconsequential.

27. Aren't flu vaccines dangerous?

There is growing mistrust about flu vaccines. The fact is that vaccines are the greatest medical advance in history. They've prevented more illness and death than any treatment.

28. Can I get the flu vaccine if I'm allergic to eggs?

Yes, there are flu vaccines that don't contain egg proteins which are approved for use in adults age 18 and older. Flu vaccines that do have egg proteins can be given safely to most people with an egg allergy. If you have questions or concerns, you should talk directly to your health care provider.

29. Are there websites where I can find additional information?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has an excellent website with information on the flu: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/faq/flu-season.htm>

