



A Foster Parent Guide
**To Foster Care
Rate Assessment**



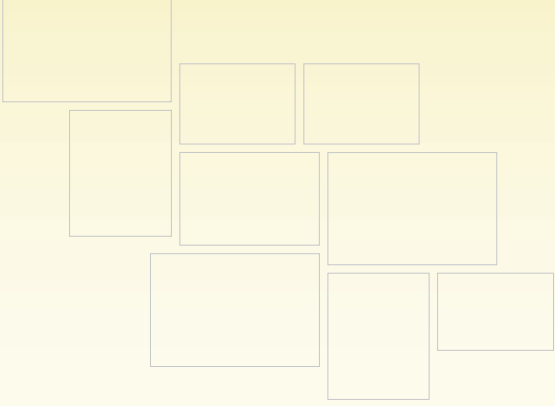
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What is the Foster Care Rate Assessment?

You will receive a foster care maintenance payment to help you meet the needs of every child who comes into your home through the foster care system.

Once a child is placed in your foster home, a Foster Care Rate Assessor will contact you. You will need to answer questions about the amount of time you spend meeting the child's needs. The answers will be given a numerical value based on the hours per week spent on caring for the child.

The numerical values will be entered into FamLink, a Department of Social and Health Services computer system that calculates reimbursement rates. The resulting foster care rate assessment will cover six months.

Following the assessment, you will receive a notification letter explaining the level of the assessment and how you can appeal if you disagree with the amount you are to be paid.

What Factors Go Into A Rate Assessment?

The rate assessment addresses the needs of the child and the foster parent's ability to meet those needs.

The Foster Care Rate Reimbursement has four levels. These levels are based on the age of the child; the behavioral, emotional, physical and mental health needs of the child; and the foster parents' ability to meet those needs.

Within those levels are three different age categories; 0-5; 6-11; and 12 and older. The older the child, the higher the reimbursement rate, regardless of factors listed above.

- Level 1 is the basic amount of care provided to any child based on the child's age, still recognizing each child has individual needs.
- Levels 2, 3 and 4 represent increased levels of non-routine caretaking provided by the foster parent.

"Non-routine caretaking" means the foster parents' extra time and effort beyond typical care needed to meet a child's additional needs. The definition is not directly based on a child's diagnosis or condition, although that diagnosis or condition could create extra demands on the foster parent that can be reimbursed.

When is a Foster Care Rate Assessment Done?

Rate assessments are done:

- Within 30 days of the first day of placement.
- Within 30 days after a child moves to another foster home.
- At least every six months when the payment authorization is due or needs to be renewed.
- When a substantial change occurs in the child's circumstances or in your ability to meet the child's needs. You, as the foster parent, or the child's assigned social worker may request an assessment be completed by the foster care rate assessor.

In all cases, the rate assessor will contact you by phone or letter to set up an appointment to complete the rate assessment.

How It Works

1. The rate assessor will call you to make an appointment to complete the assessment within 30 days of the date the child first came into your home. You may request a copy of the assessment form prior to the meeting to use to estimate the average number of hours you will spend, over the next six months, for each activity on the form, over and above the typical needs of a child of the same age.

Because you likely do not know the child well, you may be unsure about the time that will be required to care for the child. If the rate assessor believes you may have underestimated or overestimated the time required, a reassessment can occur after three months. You may be asked to track of the time you are spending attending to the child's needs. You are not required to do this, but we highly recommend it.
2. The rate assessor will discuss the child's needs for services. The rate assessor may be aware of additional community supports or public assistance available to the child. In addition, the assigned social worker, with supervisory approval, may authorize additional services using other payment sources.
3. You will receive a letter notifying you of the rate you will be paid. In addition, the rate assessor may phone you with this information. The letter also will let you know how to appeal if you are not in agreement with the payment rate.

How to Assess Available Hours

The rate assessor may ask you the following questions to help break down the available hours you have to spend to care, support and supervise the child:

- How many other foster children are there in the home?
- How many hours a week do you spend working outside the home?
- What time does the child get up in the morning?
- What is the child's bedtime?
- If the child attends school, what hours is s/he in school?
- If the child receives childcare, what hours is the child receiving childcare?
- How many days a week does the child participate in after-school activities? How many hours?
- How many hours does the child receive other services, such as respite or Medicaid Personal Care?
- Other questions that will lead to a more complete picture of the child's needs.

In addition, the rate assessor may ask the child, if age appropriate, about his or her daily routine.

The chart below displays the hours spent meeting the needs of a typically developing child. The rate assessor will subtract these hours from the amount of time actually spent, if that amount actually spent is greater. The difference will be used to calculate the level of reimbursement.

Child's Age	0-3 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	15-18 yrs
Education	2 hrs/wk	4 hrs/wk	4 hrs/wk	5 hrs/wk	2 hrs/wk
Advocacy	1 hr/week	2 hr/week	3 hr/week	3 hr/week	1 hr/week

* Advocacy means helping a child access services and support.

Levels of Care

Level 1

Foster parents can meet the needs of these children within the timeframes of a typically developing child.

Level 2

Children assessed at Level 2 most often have issues requiring more time and attention than those at Level 1, such as specific behavioral and emotional issues or intellectual challenges.

Levels 3 and 4

Children assessed at Levels 3 and 4 comprise less than 5 percent of children in foster care. These children require a lot more time from the foster parent because of behavioral issues needing intervention; psychiatric issues; severe mental health disorders; ongoing drug/alcohol involvement; behaviors that require a safety plan; or behaviors that have resulted in a child being unable to stay in one home for very long, among others.

Level 3 and 4 children often participate in more than one treatment program and/or in treatment in your home, which could have an effect on the rate.

What if I am licensed through a Tribe or private agency?

If you are licensed through a Tribe or private agency, the same rules apply to you that apply to state-licensed foster parents. The rate assessor will complete your assessment over the phone and will work with the tribal or private agency case manager as needed.

Requesting a Review of the Rate Assessment

Can a foster parent request a review of the rate assessment?

Foster parents, acting on behalf of the foster child, may request a review of the rate assessment if they believe it is incorrect.

How does it work?

1. The foster parent must make a written request for a review of the assessment.
2. The request must be sent to the individual at the address identified in the foster care rate notification letter.
3. The request must be received within 20 calendar days of the date of the notification letter. If the request is not made within 20 days, the assessment will not be reviewed, with some exceptions. An extension may be granted:
 - If the foster parent has contacted a regional foster parent liaison within the initial 20 day time period and asked for assistance to informally resolve any disagreement as to the rate assessed.
 - If the Department believes good cause exists for an extension.
4. The request must include a statement explaining why the foster parent believes the assessed rate is incorrect. The foster parent may provide additional information that he or she believes is relevant to the questions asked on the rate assessment form.

What happens during the review?

1. A staff member not involved in the original rate assessment process, either a management level staff member or someone designated by that staff member, will conduct the review.
2. The review will be conducted within 10 calendar days of receiving the request for review.
3. The reviewer will consider:
 - (a) Whether the foster parent and the rate assessor met in person or by telephone to jointly complete the rate assessment form.
 - (b) Whether the information obtained through the conversation between the rate assessor and the foster parent was accurately recorded on the rate assessment form.
 - (c) The statement from the foster parent explaining why he or she believes the assessment to be incorrect and whether that information is relevant to the automated assessment.
 - (d) Whether the information was accurately entered into and processed by FamLink.
4. The Department will not consider information about the child or the foster family that is outside the rate assessment form and will not alter a FamLink calculation that is based on a properly completed form.

How does the foster parent learn about the decision on the appeal?

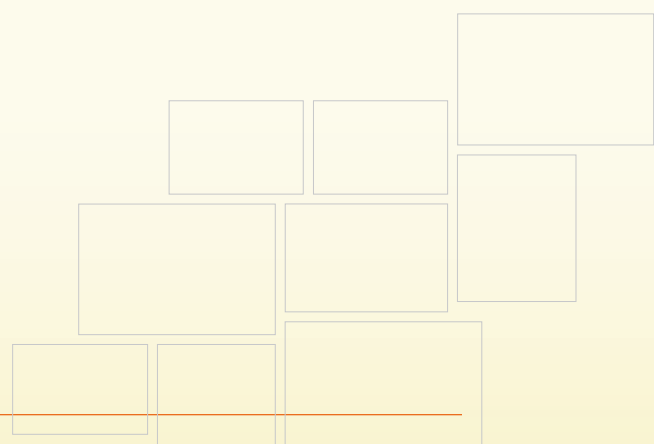
1. The Department will send the foster parent a written letter stating it:
 - (a) Upheld the rate assessment level; or
 - (b) Agrees the rate was incorrectly calculated and will adjust the rate to the accurate level.
2. If the Department upholds the rate assessment, the notice will provide information about further review.

How does the foster parent appeal the Department’s decision on review?

1. If the Department upholds the rate assessment level on review, the foster parent has the right to request a further review of the assessment by timely requesting an administrative hearing.
2. The request must be in writing and sent to the Office of Administrative Hearings.
Office of Administrative Hearings
2420 Bristol Ct. S.W., First Floor
P.O. Box 42488
Olympia WA 98504-2488
3. The request must be received by the Office within 20 days from the date of the letter notifying the foster parent of the Department’s decision on the review.
4. Foster care providers and recipients of foster care funds can request an administrative hearing review of the specific rate for a specific child, but do not have the legal right to request an administrative hearing to challenge or dispute the established rates/levels of the foster care program or to challenge the foster care rate assessment form, questions or program.

What issues may be decided by the Administrative Law Judge?

1. The Administrative Law Judge will only consider information that was considered by the Department’s review:
 - (a) Whether the foster parent and the rate assessor met in person or telephonically to jointly complete the rate assessment form.
 - (b) Whether the information obtained in the meeting between the rate assessor and foster parent was accurately recorded on the rate assessment form.
 - (c) The statement submitted previously from the foster parent explaining why he or she believes the assessment to be incorrect and whether that information from the previous review was accurately recorded on the form.
 - (d) Whether the information was accurately entered into and calculated by FamLink.
2. The Judge must not consider information about the child or the foster family that is outside the rate assessment form or that was not provided to the Department at the time of the rate assessment or at the time of the Department’s review of the rate assessment.
3. The Judge must not make a determination that conflicts with a properly completed foster care rate assessment.
4. The Judge must not consider a challenge to the Department’s established foster care rates or to the foster care rate assessment standardized form or program.



Frequently Asked Questions

Can I fill out the rate assessment and mail it in?

No. The rate assessment needs to be completed in person or by phone with the rate assessor.

How much time does the average assessment take?

About 45 minutes. The assessment process is your opportunity to provide the rate assessor with information vital to accurately assessing the child's care, support and supervision needs.

Can a child be assessed at different levels in different homes?

Yes. Since the rate assessment determines a foster parent's ability to meet a child's needs, different foster parents may be assessed at different rates.

Do siblings placed in the same foster home require separate assessments?

Yes. Each child needs his or her own assessment.

Am I required to keep a log of how much time I spend meeting the needs of the child?

No. You may choose to do so, however, for your benefit and for the benefit of other caretakers the child may have in the future.

How will I be notified of the rate the child will receive?

You will receive a letter notifying you of the rate.

What happens when a child goes on the run?

Under state policy, if you agree in writing to accept the child back in your home before 15 days expires, the payment continues for 15 days. After the child is on the run for 15 days on, the payment is stopped and the placement is closed. If the child returns to your home or a new home after 15 days, a new placement is opened and a new assessment must be done.

What if I encounter temporary difficulty with a child?

The foster care rate may be increased for a selected period of time. Temporary foster care rate increases help support the foster parent's increased efforts if the child experiences a temporary condition.

What happens when a child is re-assessed due to significant changes in health or behavior?

The rate assessor may do a re-assessment on the child that could increase the level of payment. This rate change can be applied only to current or future care of the child, not to past care.

When can a social worker provide additional services?

The child may be eligible for additional supports and services, regardless of the rate. Sometimes approval for such services must come from management at Children's Administration in your region. In other situations, the child's social worker can assist with referrals to community supports or other public assistance.

Are additional services such as special equipment and/or specialized therapy) part of the foster care rate assessment?

No. Additional services are paid for separately from the monthly foster care reimbursement.

What happens with the completed assessment?

A written copy of the assessment is kept in the child's case file and a history of all assessments authorized for the child is kept in FamLink.

What happens if I disagree with the rate assessed?

You can appeal a rate decision. This can occur at three times: when the rate is denied; when it is reduced; or when it is terminated. One factor to note: when a child improves in your care and the exceptional tasks you have performed no longer are needed, the rate will be reduced.

When does a child's foster care payment end?

The payment ends when:

1. The child is placed in a different foster home.
2. The child is returned to the biological parent.
3. The child is adopted.
4. The child turns 18 and is not participating in the Extended Foster Program.
5. If the child is participating in the Extended Foster Care program, the reimbursement will end on the child's 21st birthday, or when he or she loses eligibility for extended foster care.

