 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>95</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Respite Care	Page 1 of 5
Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 10/9/2014
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy No. 95	Dated: 12/01/2004

Purpose

To describe the requirements related to DCF approval of respite care providers and use of respite care for children and youth in DCF custody.

Definition

Caregiver (as referenced in this policy) is a licensed kinship foster home or foster home.

Respite care is planned care intended to provide a break for the child/youth's caregiver

The two types of respite care referenced in this policy are:

Formal respite care is a planned arrangement for care by an individual or family who is not the child or youth's regular caregiver. Formal respite care is:

- a single event that is more than 48 hours in duration and/or,
- a recurring event that occurs more than 11 times in any 12 month period.

Informal respite care is normal developmental activities that may also provide a break for a caregiver, such as leaving a child occasionally with a babysitter, visits or overnights with friends or family members.

Policy

The policy applies to respite care for children/youth in custody, whether the respite provider is paid by DCF Family Services or through another funding source. This policy does not apply to those providing care under PCA or in other licensed non-residential childcare facilities.

Social workers will work with caregivers to assess the need for respite and make arrangements accordingly. When making arrangements for respite (formal and informal) social workers are required to do the following:

- Check to see if there are any other youth placed in a foster care placement or receiving respite in that home.
- Inform the Resource Coordinator when a child/youth is utilizing respite.

Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Respite Care	Page 2 of 5

Formal Respite Care

If any plan to provide respite for a child’s caregiver spans more than 48 hours or more than 11 days in any 12-month period with the same respite care provider, approval is required. For more information, refer to the **Licensing Regulations for Foster Care**, which outlines the discretion for foster parents to identify and utilize respite care.

Informal Respite Care

Informal respite care should promote normalcy for the child/youth and utilize natural supports whenever possible. Normal developmental experiences of childhood should not be turned into regulated events that require respite approval. It is not necessary or appropriate to conduct background checks for events considered normal childhood events.

Summary of Respite Care with Examples


Respite care is planned care that is intended to provide a break for the child/youth’s caregiver.	
Informal Respite Care	Formal Respite Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster parents hiring a babysitter • Child/youth visiting friends or attending sleepovers • Contact with, and overnight visits at the homes of, relatives approved in child/youth’s case plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child/youth stays for more than 48 hours with a district approved provider • An arrangement that occurs more than 11 times in any 12 month period

Approval of Formal Respite Care Providers

Approval of formal respite care requires that the social worker or resource coordinator visit the home of the proposed provider. During the visit, the social worker or resource coordinator will complete the section of the Application for Foster Care pertaining to the physical facility.

The criteria for approval as a respite provider are:

- the caretakers are at least eighteen years of age;
- the caretakers have not had a foster care license denied or revoked;
- no member of the household is a perpetrator of child or adult abuse or has a criminal history that suggests children would be at risk in the home;
- no member of the household has been a defendant on a Final Order (for a Relief from Abuse, Stalking Order or Juvenile Protection Order) that has been issued in the past three years;
- the family is not providing child care in the home, except they may provide respite care for a child for whom they already provide child care.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		95
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Respite Care	Page 3 of 5

During the visit, the social worker or resource coordinator must discuss:

- general information about why children are placed and what behaviors they may see in those children;
- the special needs of the individual child for whom they will provide respite care (if a child has been identified);
- confidentiality;
- appropriate discipline for children in custody;
- how to access services in case of an emergency during or after the regular work day; and
- reimbursement procedures.

The proposed respite provider (unless already a licensed kin of foster care provider) must fill out FS-687 Information on Household Members. This form allows for background checks to be completed for the respite provider. The social worker or resource coordinator will forward this form to RLSI for the completion of the VCIC, Child Protection Registry, and VCAS checks.


Providing Child-Specific Information to Respite Care Providers for Formal Respite Care

As a division, we must ensure adequate safety for the children/youth that are in our care and custody. In situations defined as formal respite care, the social worker or resource coordinator is responsible for fully informing respite providers of a child/youth’s specific needs or safety concerns and to share any safety plan in place to address these risks.

If a child has specialized medical needs the social worker or the resource coordinator shall ensure all pertinent information regarding medication administration, physical care needed, and emergency medical instructions are communicated to the respite provider.

If a child or youth exhibits inappropriate sexualized behavior or poses other risks to safety, special attention must be paid to the safety needs of individuals in the home. The social worker or resource coordinator must discuss these risks and develop a plan to reduce them with the respite provider.

If the behaviors of a person other than the child may pose a risk to the child or the respite provider, the social worker or the resource coordinator will clearly identify those risks and work with the respite provider to create a plan to address these risks. Situations that may warrant a plan include: a threat by a parent/family member to abduct the child, prior threats of harm to the child or care providers by a parent/family

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		95
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Respite Care	Page 4 of 5

member, etc.

Social workers and resource coordinators shall inform each other of children or youth placed in households for respite care or longer term care. Social workers and resource coordinators should plan for children/youth’s safety and well-being accordingly.

Respite care providers are encouraged, but not required, to attend Kin and Foster Parent Training.

Providing Child-Specific Information to Respite Care Providers for Informal Respite Care

When informal respite has been set up the caregiver of the child/youth will share all pertinent information regarding medication administration, specialized medical needs, physical care needed, supervision requirements and/or emergency medical instructions.

Licensed Kin and Foster Families as Respite Care Providers

With the approval of the district office, licensed kin and foster families may provide respite care within their existing licensing capacity. If by caring for the child, licensed kin or foster families will exceed their license capacity, Policy 223, Exceeding Capacity in Family Foster Homes applies. This policy states that any over capacity within a licensed home must be approved by the Residential Licensing Special Investigations Unit.

Tasks

Social Worker & Resource Coordinator Tasks

- Conducts home visit, covering the topics required by policy.
- Obtains the family’s completed Application for Care of Children in Custody [FS-621].
- Checks Master Index, DOC, and VCAS.
- Sends or faxes completed copy of Application for Care of Children in Custody [FS-621] to the Residential Licensing and Special Investigations (RLSI) Unit, indicating that the family is applying for respite care only.
- Provides necessary training to applicants.
- If respite will occur in the family’s home, visit to review the physical facility.
- Ensure that respite care arrangements are safe for everyone in the home.
- Ensures that all information specific to the child’s special needs and or any safety concerns, as they pertain to the child or youth or his/her family, is shared with the respite provider.
- Provide a placement checklist (or communicate all information contained therein) to the respite provider.
- Processes foster parent expense accounts and/or respite bills.

Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Respite Care	Page 5 of 5

District Director Tasks

- Reviews recommendation and makes approval decision.
- Approves expense accounts and/or bills. Tracks expenditures (or designates other staff person to perform this function).
- Determines if specific requests for respite care can be approved in light of available funds.

RLSI Tasks

- Complete necessary background checks on all formal respite applicants.