FINANCIAL HANDBOOK FOR NEWLY LICENSED RESOURCE FAMILIES IN ALASKA

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Alaska Center for Resource Families
A Project of Northwest Resource Associates

For Use in the Core Training for Resource Families

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Acknowledgements

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NOTE: This Handbook strives to be accurate and up to date. However, policies and procedures may change or be slightly different in your area of the state. In cases of conflicting information, regulations, statutes, and OCS policies and procedures take precedence over the information in this handbook. Direct any questions to your local OCS office.

Introduction

Thank you for providing care for a child in the custody of the State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services. You have a very important job and you provide an invaluable service to your community and to our state. It is important that you receive the resources you need to care for the children placed in your home.

This handbook gives you an overview of how the financial aspects of licensed foster care works in the State of Alaska. The Department of Health and Social Services follows state and federal regulations and is given a set budget by the Alaska Legislature to fund its divisions including the Office of Children’s Services. Policies and Procedures have been developed to guide these expenditures. This handbook gives you a general overview of the financial procedures you will use most as a resource parent.

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The Foster Care Stipend

Resource families are not paid a salary for what they do. Licensed resource families, however, do receive a monthly foster care stipend for each foster child in their home. Stipends are intended to offset the costs associated with caring for a child so that the cost of care does not burden the resource family. The rates are established through regulation by the Department of Health and Social Services and include base/standard rates, emergency shelter rates and augmented rates. Due to geographic differences in the cost of living, stipend rates vary by geographic area. Check with your local office for current rates. You may also contact the Provider Payment Unit located in the Office of Children’s Services Central Office located in Juneau at 1-877-465-2215.

Licensed foster care providers will receive monthly reimbursements for providing care to a child in the state’s custody based on your assigned worker’s electronic verification of the number of days a child resided in your home. The stipend includes the day the child is placed in your home, but not the day the child leaves. Your family should have a stable income to rely upon other than the stipend and not depend on the stipend alone to pay rent or for time sensitive necessities. The monthly stipend is issued for services rendered in the preceding month. That means it is possible that you may not receive your first foster care stipend until up to six weeks after a child is first placed in your home.

Base/Standard Rates

The rate for the child in your home will most often be the standard rate. Standard rates for foster home care include stipend for the following plus an indication of what is expected of the resource family to spend on this item: (Note: The percentages listed behind the item are estimates and vary from month to month.)

- Food, including meals and snacks (35%)
- Clothing replacement as needed by child (10%)
- Shelter, including utilities and use of household furnishings and equipment (14%)
- Personal and grooming items for the foster child, such as toothbrushes, diapers, haircuts, and other essentials (2%)
- School supplies and regular school activities (5%)
- Games, toys, books, and equipment (5%)
- General recreation such as picnics, community sports and movies (12%)
- Usual transportation expenses on behalf of the foster child including transportation to treatment, medical appointment, after school activities, and visits (6%)
- Allowance as appropriate (2%)
- Baby-sitting (2%)
- Miscellaneous (5%)
Emergency Shelter Rates

Emergency shelter rates are paid to a licensed resource family when children are placed in a home with less than 24 hours notice. Emergency shelter rates for a child may be paid for a maximum of 10 days for any one placement. Emergency shelter rates are 120% of the standard rate. If the child continues to stay in your home for more than ten days, the stipend rate then would revert to standard stipend level.

Augmented Rates

Increased rates may be paid for children placed by the OCS if the level of care a child requires has been assessed and determined by the OCS to exceed the basic (standard) level of care. When the standard rate is augmented, an extra amount is added to the daily rate for a certain period of time. The assessment needed to document augmented/difficulty of care is completed by the OCS worker. Augmented rates or ongoing costs should be approved at the time of placement on the Foster Care Plan and Agreement. Re-determination must be made every six months and when the child changes placement. You may be asked to complete additional training in order to be approved for a requested augmented rate.

Each request for augmented rates is assessed and review on a case by case basis by OCS and Based on Available funding. Augmented rates for the following situation may be approved:

- **Specialized:** Child requires more intensive care and supervision from foster family to deal with the child’s identified specific need.
- **Structured:** Child has chronic and severe problems that require the foster family members to be additionally trained to provide for more intensive services to the foster child.

For a calendar of Foster Care Stipend Payment and Adoption Subsidy payments, go to the state OCS Publications page and look for Foster Care & Adoption Payment Calendar. (http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/publications/default.aspx)
What are the Basic Foster Care Rates?

Check with your local office for current rates. You may also contact the Provider Payment Unit located in the Office of Children’s Services Central Office located in Juneau at 1-877-465-2215. At the time of the publication of this booklet (December 2014), the base rates are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Daily Rate (Standard)</th>
<th>Emergency Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5 years</td>
<td>24.20</td>
<td>37.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 11 years</td>
<td>27.66</td>
<td>37.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 20 years</td>
<td>30.03</td>
<td>37.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rates will vary around the state due to wide differences in the cost of living. The base rate listed above will be adjusted by the geographic multiplier shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Geographic Multiplier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage Region</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks/Elliott/Steese Highways</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenallen region</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Junction/Tok Region</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road less Interior</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat Su Region</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenai Peninsula</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William Sound</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodiak Region</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctic Region</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethel/Dillingham</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleutian Region</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Small Communities</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Small, Mid-Size and Large Communities</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above tables were shared with resource families in June of 2013 by KariLee Pietz, Social Service Program Officer with the State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services, Resource Family Section.

For any questions about the foster care rate or payment issues that you cannot clear up through your caseworker, contact the Provider Payment Unit located in the Office of Children’s Services Central Office located in Juneau at 1-877-465-2215.
Taxes

Because the foster care payment is considered a reimbursement and not a wage or salary, the foster care payment is not considered as taxable income by the Internal Revenue Service. Resource parents will typically not list their foster children as dependents on their tax returns. However, if a child has lived with you for more than half of the year, no one else is claiming the child as a dependent, and the child did not contribute more than half of their own support, you might qualify to claim that child as a dependent on your taxes. Refer to IRS Publication 17 or contact your local IRS Office for additional information to see if you qualify for this deduction.

While foster care stipend are not considered taxable income by the IRS, stipends received by contracted stand-by emergency homes to keep beds available are taxable.

Receiving Your Stipend

OCS uses a system of computerized payment to licensed homes. When you first become licensed, your licensing worker will enter all your provider information in the state child welfare data system called ORCA (Online Resources for the Children of Alaska). When a child is then placed in your home, the caseworker for the child enters placement information in the ORCA system. At the beginning of the month following the child’s placement, the caseworker is required to “verify” the placement dates are correct. This verification process triggers the payment process in the ORCA system. Your first payment should arrive near the beginning of the second month that you are providing care.

There is an Electronic Payment option available for foster care stipend using a Financial EDI (Electronic Data process) to enable electronic transfer of payments directly to your bank. Talk to your social worker about filling out the EDI Payment Agreement Form in order to set this up. You can also find out more options about this option at the website https://fin.admin.state.ak.us/dof/electronic_payments/index.jsp.

As with any computerized system, human error may generate inaccurate payments or overpayments. It is important to review your remittance stub to ensure you are paid for the days a child is in your care. Every effort is made to ensure your payments are accurate. The law, however, requires that overpayments be returned or collected back. Overpayments of less than $100 will be deducted from your next monthly stipend. You should be notified in writing of any overpayment in excess of $100. This will allow you the opportunity to make payments on the overpayment to prevent a financial hardship.

For more information on taxes, refer to IRS Publication 17 or consult a qualified tax professional or your local IRS Office. You can also find the most current version of this publication at http://www.irs.gov/uac/Publication-17,-Your-Federal-Income-Tax-1.
Absences from the Home

The division may authorize continued foster care payments during a child’s absence under certain circumstances:

**Runaways** – If a child is missing, is a runaway or is gone for more than 12 hours, stipend may be paid for up to five days if authorized by the worker. The five-day payment may be authorized only if the resource family immediately notifies the caseworker of the unapproved absence of 10 hours or more. If, after exceeding 5 days, the intent is to return the child to the resource family, payment will resume when the child returns. If it is determined the child will not return to your home, payment will be made only through the date of the determination, not the full five days. If the absence from a foster home extends beyond five nights, payment will resume when the child returns to the foster home and the assigned worker authorizes payment.

**Hospitalization, Home Visits, Detention** – Payment to you may continue for up to 14 nights for home visits, in cases of hospitalization for medical or psychiatric care, or if the child is placed in detention if the child is expected to return to your home or if a determination has not been made. If it is determined the child will not return to your home, payment will be made only through the date of the determination, not the full 14 nights.

What if your foster care stipend doesn’t come?

If you do not receive your foster care stipend by the 15th of the month, first, you should contact your caseworker first to make sure the information was entered into ORCA. If it has, ask your caseworker for help in getting the stipend. If your social worker can’t help you, call OCS Provider Payments in the OCS Central Office at 1-877-465-2215.

For a calendar of Foster Care Stipend Payment and Adoption Subsidy payments, go to the state OCS Publications page and look for Foster Care & Adoption Payment Calendar. [http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/publications/default.aspx](http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/publications/default.aspx)
Other Resources

Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP) and Native Family Assistance Program (NFAP)

Unlicensed relative providers may choose to apply for the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP) or a Native Family Assistance Program (NFAP) (if living within an area serve by a Native Family Assistance Program) for cash Assistance. These payments can help with food, housing, clothing and school costs for a relative child in care.

WIC (Women, Infants & Children Program)

Foster children under five years are eligible for WIC (Women, Infant and Children’s) Program, which provides coupons to get milk, peanut butter, cheese, cereal, and formula. Find out more about the WIC Program at http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/nutri/WIC/default.htm

Ideas from Other Resource Families:

*Thrift stores and free community clothing exchanges can be wonderful when kids come with nothing and the initial clothing allowance doesn’t quite go all the way.*

*Foster children qualify for free lunches and breakfasts with school districts, even if your family is over the income qualifications.*

*Check with your local OCS office about a “starter kit” for an emergency placement. Some offices have community members who have assembled these kits with toothbrushes, paste, soap, shampoo, and sometimes pajamas and blankets to help with emergency placements.*

*The Alaska Center for Resource Families has assembled resource listings for Anchorage, Mat Su, Juneau, and Fairbanks that can help with supports for families. You should receive a copy of this resource book in Core Training for Resource Families or go to www.acrf.org and look under the Resource Tab for “Support for Families.”*
Other Financial Issues

Clothing Allowance

If, when a child enters the foster care system, the amount and quality of the child’s clothing does not meet a minimum standard, OCS may approve a limited one-time clothing allowance of up to $300. The clothing allowance does not apply when the child moves from foster home to foster home. A clothing allowance is used only when the child initially comes into custody and does not have basic items such as pants, shirts, shoes, snowsuit or boots. Make sure to complete a Clothing Inventory when the child comes into your home. When listing a child’s clothes on the inventory, list only clothing that is wearable and fits the child.

The child should participate (as appropriate to his age) in the purchase of clothing needed. Clothing purchased should be well-fitting, attractive, seasonable, and appropriate for the child’s age, sex, and individual needs, comparable to that worn by other children in the community. After placement, the monthly stipend is to be used for the costs of maintaining and routine replacement of items as the need arises. Should the placement for the foster child be changed, clothing purchased for the child is to go with the child at the time of change. Clothing purchased for a foster child belongs to the foster child, not the resource family home in which the child resided.

When a Child Leaves Your Home

When a child leaves your home to return home or move to another placement, you should send along all clothes, items, and toys purchased with the foster care payment or clothing voucher. A child should leave your home with an adequate wardrobe if he/she has been in your home for any length of time. To make sure a child leaves your home with an adequate amount of clothing, complete a Clothing Inventory Form. (06-9741)

One-time Costs

One-time items are goods or services that are not included in the stipend because they are one time or short term costs that exceed $100. You may request one-time funds for a foster child when there are no other resources for payment. Make a request in writing to your caseworker. You must receive written approval of reimbursement for the expenditure prior to purchasing the goods or service. For one-time costs, you need to go through your caseworker who will evaluate the request and if in agreement, submit a Request for Funds form through the appropriate channels.

Examples of items that may be, but are not required to be, approved onetime costs include:

- Special beds or mattresses, prosthetic devices, orthopedic shoes or appliances and aids for children with disabilities. (Check with the Division of Behavioral Health for any assistance they may be able to offer).
- Special event costs such as graduation costs if the child is placed less than 90 days before the event.

REMEMBER: It is important to make your request prior to incurring the cost of the one-time item. Requests made after the fact may be denied.

**Mileage Reimbursement**

OCS may reimburse the costs of transportation that exceed 50 miles a week per child to frequent, scheduled home visits, or medical or therapeutic appointments such as physical therapy or counseling. Mileage reimbursement must be pre-approved by the child’s assigned worker. This rate is the same as for a state employee reimbursement for transportation.

**Always Get Pre-Approved Approval**

Remember to get approval and the Purchase Authorization before you put money out of pocket. A social worker can apply for the special funds but cannot give approval for funds. Approval has to come from a supervisor, a staff manager or state office depending on the size of the request. Not all requests are approved, so make sure you have approval or a Purchase Authorization in hand before you spend money. If you have received an approved Purchase Authorization, save your original receipts and attach them to the Purchase Authorization to send to the Accounting Department in your region.

**Damages and Loss**

Costs related to modest damages and losses are normal in the care of children and are included in the standard rate. However, the OCS may reimburse a resource family for damages and loss up to $5000 under certain circumstances. These may include financial losses resulting from physical injury inflicted by a foster child to a member of the resource family household or to property of the household not covered by other insurance protection the resource family may have. These losses must be documented by the resource family. Documentation includes filing a report with a law enforcement agency as required by the OCS and corroborated by the OCS. The following circumstances must exist:

- The damage or loss is a result of a deliberate act with malicious intent or with gross negligence on the part of the child.
- The resource family provided adequate supervision and exercised appropriate precautions considering the child’s maturity and behavioral history.
- Damage or loss claimed does not include rental or other payment for lost time or lost use of the damaged or lost items.
- The damage or loss exceeds $100 for a single event or $150 cumulative.

You must submit a completed Foster Parent Report of Stolen/Damaged Property or Personal Injury (06-9440) form within 72 hours from the time of the loss or physical injury. You may obtain this report form from your local or regional office. A resource family home is expected to own basic home insurance, if purchasing their home. Renters may be able to purchase renter’s insurance. The $5000 is intended to cover the deductible in case
of fire or other major damage if all the above conditions are met. You will be asked to submit 3 estimates to your social worker for review prior to the authorization of a PA.

Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend

Resource families do not need to apply for the PFD for the children in their home. The OCS caseworker is responsible for applying for the foster child’s Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend Check for every year the child is in care. The money will be held in trust for the child until the child emancipates from foster care or until custody is returned to the birth parents or to a permanent placement where the child is not in OCS custody.

For children who are adopted, PFDs are held in trust for one year after the finalization of the adoption; at which time, the PFDs held in trust are released to the adoptive parents. For children who are in a legal guardianship, the PFDs are held in trust by OCS until the child reaches his or her 18th birthday at which time, the PFD trust is then released directly to the child.

Request for Special Funds

Pending funding availability, other financial support for services in excess of the standard rate and essential to the success of the child while in your home may be available. Other avenues for payment (scholarship or grant programs through schools or other civic or tribal organizations) must first be exhausted. Each request must be preauthorized by the caseworker or their supervisor. All requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Examples of goods or services may include items such as:
- Athletic or Arts programs
- Summer camp
- Airfare to assist a child participate in one family vacation in a 12-month period with the child’s resource family if consistent with the caseplan. (See below for more information.)

Examples of goods or services not included in requests for special funds:
- Private school tuition
- Car rental
- Meals
- Theme park admission
- Any good or service purchased without preauthorization

Remember that each request must be preauthorized by the caseworker or their supervisor. All requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. These items are not guaranteed to be approved for payment but will be considered based on the needs of the child. All staff must receive approval through the Request for Funds process prior to making a commitment to a

To find out more about the RFF process (Request for Funds), go to the Child Protection Manual located online at the OCS website under Publications, and look for section 6.2.2.7 REQUEST FOR SPECIAL NEEDS FUNDS.
client or provider for expenditures for on-going, one-time, or short-term costs. Requests for Funds may not overlap fiscal years. A fiscal year is July 1 through June 30.

Child Care Assistance and Expenses

In some pre-approved situations, a child in foster care may be placed in licensed child care for a regular part of the day. Child care may be partially paid for by OCS to ensure the continuity of care due to the employment of the resource parent(s). Approval for assistance with child care payments is reviewed by your caseworker and their supervisors on a case-by-case basis. Contact your caseworker for the process for obtaining approval for potential OCS payment for child care.

Here are some things to keep in mind if you will be requesting assistance with child care.

- Choose a child care provider meeting the child’s and resource family’s needs.
- Contact your caseworker or your local child care referral agency to ensure child care provider is licensed. In some communities. In communities where there are few licensed child care options, families may use a licensed foster home for child care.
- Provide your caseworker with all pertinent information on the provider: contact person, address, telephone number, etc., and forward contract to OCS Regional Finance Office.
- OCS will provide up to $700 monthly for child care services or up to the published rates for the child care facility. Resource parents pay any charges above that amount.
- Resource families should contact OCS Regional Finance Office with any questions. Invoices from child care providers should be faxed or mailed immediately upon the last day of the billing period.
- Resource parents should never name themselves as guarantors.
- The assistance goes for child care services. OCS does not pay day-care late fees, additional charges for early/late drop-off or pick-up, or for transportation to and/or from child care.
Request for Travel Funds

OCS wants to support resource families in involving foster children in family activities such as vacations and travel. If you want to travel with your foster children, plan ahead and talk to your worker as far ahead of the event as you can to get the necessary permissions. Travel assistance can be requested through the Request for Funds process once in a twelve month period when resource families want foster children to go on vacation with them that requires airfare. It is imperative that as much advanced notice as possible is given when resource families request funds for foster children to travel. The deadlines for submitting travel request for holidays or summer vacations vary by region. Advance planning give OCS a better chance of matching travel plans with pre-existing or held reservations already in place by the resource family. Please contact your foster child’s caseworker with any questions.

Other Travel Tips for Resource Parents Traveling with Children in Care:
- Ensure that requests for travel are done well in advance, at least 4 weeks prior to planned travel. This will ensure that the purchase of tickets will be the most cost effective and in case any changes need to be made they can be done in advance. This includes if you intend to request reimbursement for travel.
- Ensure that you have received the Authority to Transport from your Social Worker and that all the information on the Authority is correct.
- Keep the boarding pass for each child in placement to give to your social worker once travel is complete as well as the original receipt of ticket purchase if you are requesting reimbursement.
- Reimbursement will not occur until once travel is complete and receipt and boarding pass are received by accounting.

Purchase Authorizations

A Purchase Authorization (PA) must be approved and issued before other (non-medical, non-child care) child-related expenses in excess of the standard foster care rate are incurred. Examples include extraordinary clothing, family travel or required personal incidentals. Once a purchase has been completed, resource parents are to attach the PA to the original bill/invoice, and/or include original receipts.

The PA and invoice/receipts must be sent to Regional Finance Office, not the caseworker. Payment will be made directly to the service provider or the resource family will be reimbursed.

Using Purchase Authorizations  A Purchase Authorization is the written approval and paperwork giving you the ability to purchase a preapproved item or service.

- Purchase Authorizations (PA) are for one-time use and are not to be copied.
- Use of a PA is limited to the stated purpose. Do not use it to buy something else for your family.
- PAs are specific to individual child(ren) in the care of a resource family.
- Since PAs represent an expenditure of the State of Alaska and federal funds, each expenditure is subject to review and oversight.
Resource parents are urged to contact the OCS Regional Finance Office with questions regarding the appropriate use of PAs.

Savings Accounts

Money earned by a child in foster care (including gifts and allowances) is a child’s personal property. If a child has over $200, help the child establish a personal bank account. No member of a resource family may borrow or spend money acquired by the child in foster care. You may need to restrict the amount of spending money a child has access to if in the child’s best interest. When a child receives a substantial amount of money from any source other than the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (such as earnings, gifts, etc.) report this to the placement worker.

Independent Living Supports for Youth

Independent Living Funds
Resource families who are raising adolescents and will be supporting youth as they age out of foster care should know about Independent Living Fund supports for youth in care. For youth in out-of-home care who are 16 years or older, limited federal funds are available to help provide for educational and vocational preparation costs, and to help to prepare a youth for independent living. Funds can be used for obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training and placement, daily living training, money management training, self care training, social development training, work and study training, post secondary education and more. These funds need to be applied for through the Independent Living Specialist in your OCS region. Contact the Independent Living Specialist in your region for more information about what is available.

Who Is Eligible?

For Youth in Foster Care: Any youth in out-of-home care age 16 or over is eligible. It does not matter whether they are in residential care, in a foster home, or in an unlicensed relative placement.

For Youth No-Longer In Custody: Any youth who has reached the age of 16 or older while in state foster care and has not yet reached the age of 21 is eligible. This includes youth who have been adopted, entered into guardianship, or have returned home after turning 16.

Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)
The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program was authorized under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act in January 2002. These funds assist eligible current and former foster youth in attending post secondary education and training programs. The education or training program must meet the certain criteria such as awarding or bachelors or 2 year degree or is a vocational program that provides training for gainful employment.
University of Alaska Tuition Waiver
The University of Alaska in partnership with the Office of Children's Services provide fifteen Presidential tuition waivers per year to eligible foster youth and former foster youth. The Tuition Waiver may be combined with an Education or Training Voucher (ETV) that will pay for up to $5,000 per year towards books fees, room and board. Students will still need additional funding through work, Pell grants, savings, loans and scholarships to complete a degree. For more information of the University of Alaska Tuition Waiver, go to the Independent Living Program Page on the State of Alaska OCS website at http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/independentliving/default.aspx

The easiest way to find the Independent Living Specialist for your Region is to ask your social worker for contact information or call your local OCS office.

Or go to the State of Alaska OCS website page of Independent Living and find contact information at http://hss.state.ak.us/ocs/IndependentLiving/contact.htm
Medical Expenses and Medicaid

When children come into the foster care system, OCS is responsible for their basic medical care. Most children who enter foster care are eligible for Medicaid. Medicaid covers the cost of the foster child’s medical care, dental care, pharmaceutical services and any health needs.

When a child is placed in your home, the social worker (or in some offices, a social services associate) submits an application to OCS’s Regional Medicaid Eligibility Unit who makes an eligibility determination for the child. Each OCS region has its own Medicaid Eligibility Unit who processes the applications within 30 days of submission. Upon approval, a Medicaid card is then mailed to the address on the form. Take this card to the medical provider (doctor, pharmacy or hospital) and use for payment at the time of the child’s appointment.

If the child already has a medical or dental care provider, it should be noted on the Consent Form for Emergency and Routine Medical Care. You may choose your own health provider, but for continuity of medical care, you should consider using the child’s current health care provider. If you choose a different provider, check to be sure that the provider accepts Medicaid. If you have trouble locating a health care professional in your area who accepts Medicaid, contact the OCS office in your area or a public health center. Or call the Alaska Medicaid Recipient Helpline at 1-800-780-9972. Be sure to take Consent Form for Emergency and Routine Medical Care with you when you seek medical care.

Use a Medicaid Provider for Your Child’s Health Care

By regulation, if the child is Medicaid eligible, a resource parent needs to use a Medicaid Provider for non-emergency care. If emergency treatment is needed, then the foster care provider should seek treatment immediately without prior authorization but must notify OCS as soon as possible. OCS may enroll the medical provider if they are not a Medicaid provider.

Resource parents should not pay for medical procedures out of pocket and then apply for reimbursement. Medicaid cannot reimburse for resource parent expenses, and the State of Alaska might not approve reimbursement for the expense.

To find out who accepts Medicaid in Alaska or what is covered by Medicaid, Call the Alaska Medicaid Recipient Helpline at 1-800-780-9972.

Or e-mail RecipientHelp@xerox.com

Call Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. After hours, please leave a message and your call will be returned the following business day.
What is Covered by Medicaid

Medicaid covers the cost of the foster child’s medical care, dental care, pharmaceutical services and any health needs. However be aware that the Office of Children’s Services has the legal custody for a child in foster care, so First Health may not release information about a particular child directly to the resource parents. Resource parents should address any major medical needs or treatment directly with the child’s social worker. Nearly every major pharmacy, including those at Fred Meyers, Wal-Mart, Safeway, and Carrs stores accepts Medicaid.

If You Do Not Get Your Medicaid Card and a Child Needs Care...

The Medicaid Card will be sent directly to the address on the application. The foster care provider should immediately advise OCS if he or she did not receive the Medicaid card.

If you need to take a child to a health provider, and you have not yet received your Medicaid Coupon, you have several options. First, start with your social worker who will contact the Regional Medicaid Eligibility Unit. This unit can issue emergency coupons, or fax over the needed information to your health providers. If your social worker is unavailable, you can contact the Medicaid Eligibility Unit directly and explain your situation. If you don’t know how to reach them, contact the receptionist of the office or region that you are in and ask to talk directly to someone in the Medicaid Unit. These folks can help you get the Medicaid card you need to get the care for the child.

If a child is not Medicaid eligible, payment for medical care may be handled in one of several ways. If a child has no resources for medical care, OCS is financially responsible for these services. However, prior authorization from OCS is required. Before any discretionary medical or dental treatment is provided, it must be pre-authorized by OCS or DJJ. Medicaid criteria will be used by OCS to determine if a procedure or treatment is routine regardless of the child’s eligibility for Medicaid.

Indian Health Service Health Coverage

Alaska Native/American Indian children must be enrolled or a descendent of an enrolled tribal member with a federally recognized Tribe in order to receive health benefits from the Indian Health Service (IHS).

Resource families can use the IHS clinic in their community for eligible foster children. (In Anchorage, that clinic is the Alaska Native Medical Center.) If the application for Medicaid indicates that a child may be of American Indian or Alaska Native ethnicity, the Unit will determine eligibility for Indian Health Services treatment. If a child receives services at an IHS clinic, the clinic may bill Medicaid to recoup part of its services but a resource parent is not restricted to taking a child to IHS medical services only. The resource parent may take the child to any medical providers who accept Medicaid. However, for the continuity of care, you should strongly consider using the child’s current health care provider.
Payment Out of Pocket and Reimbursement to Resource Parent

If you pay out of your own pocket for things such as inexpensive prescriptions, you are taking the chance that you will not be reimbursed by OCS.

By regulation, if the child is Medicaid eligible, a resource parent needs to use a Medicaid Provider for non-emergency care. This includes prescriptions and regular doctor visits and treatment. If emergency treatment is needed, then the foster care provider should seek treatment immediately without prior authorization but must notify OCS as soon as possible. OCS may enroll the medical provider if they are not a Medicaid provider. If the foster care provider elects to use a non-Medicaid provider for non-emergency procedures, there is no guarantee that the state of Alaska will reimburse them. Remember that all non-emergency procedures outside of routine medical care needs prior authorization from OCS.

If the foster care provider requires over the counter medical items, then they should request prior authorization from OCS and receive approval before spending the money. Regulations require that the foster care provider seek prior authorization for non-emergency medical work. Any discretionary medical procedures not covered by Medicaid must be prior authorized and consistent with the child’s case plan. The procedures/treatment must also follow Medicaid criteria.

If the child is not Medicaid eligible, then OCS is financially responsible but again the resource parents must receive prior authorization. A verbal assurance from your social worker is not a guarantee of payment. Make sure a request for funds has been approved and a Purchase Authorization has been sent to the provider prior to the appointment date. Resource parents should never write themselves down as the guarantor when seeking medical services.

Medical Care While Travelling

When you are planning to travel with a child care, remember to take with you:

- The Authorization for Travel form
- The Consent for Emergency and Routine Medical Care, and
- The child’s Medicaid card.

In the event of an emergency that requires medical treatment and/or hospitalization, you must have proof that the child has medical coverage. Should the physician or the hospital refuse to accept Medicaid, contact the assigned worker for reimbursement procedures. You will need a receipt for services rendered.

Generally Alaska Medicaid Benefits cannot be used out-of-state unless the service is pre-authorized by Medicaid and the medical provider is enrolled with the Alaska Medicaid System. In these cases, contact you assigned worker if medical services are needed out-of-state.
An Overview of Medical Expenses:

- If the child has emergency medical issues, seek treatment immediately. (Remember to take your Consent Form for Emergency and Routine Medical Care.)

- Foster parents should get a Medicaid card in the mail to use for medical payment. When arranging non-emergency medical appointments, take this card with you or if you have not yet received the card for the child in your care, arrange for a Medicaid authorization or Purchase Authorization (PA) or from your caseworker.

- Present the Medicaid card or PA to the medical provider. This ensures the medical bill will be paid through Medicaid or by OCS.

- Do not name yourself as a guarantor on any medical-related expenses. OCS should be listed at the guarantor. Contact your OCS Regional Finance Office with any questions.

- If an error is made and a medical bill is received, immediately contact the OCS Regional Finance Office.

- When a child leaves your home, make sure that the Medicaid card goes with the child to the next placement or is returned to the case worker so that medical care can be continued.