

Topic:

Updates to

DIFFICULTY OF CARE AUGMENTED RATES

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Alaska Center for Resource Families, May 2023

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOSTER PARENT TRAINING CREDIT:

**Read through this self-study*

**Fill out the "CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING" Questionnaire*

**Return to ACRF for 1.0 hour of training credit*

One support that comes with being a licensed foster home for the Office of Children's Services or a Tribal Court is the monetary reimbursement for the care and supervision of a child in State or Tribal custody. This typically gets direct deposited to the licensed parent's bank account each month. The foster care reimbursement is just that, a reimbursement for expenses incurred while a child is placed in out-of-home care. A daily calculation or Base Rate of care is applied to a licensed home when a child is placed. Generally, this covers such things as food, clothing, books/toys, activities and other instances where the funding helps to support the child in care. The reimbursement is not a paycheck for services nor is it a supplemental income to support a family with little to no financial stability. Licensed homes should be able to demonstrate financial stability prior to becoming licensed and not as a result of becoming licensed.

DIFFICULTY OF CARE AUGMENTED RATE

But what about those times when it seems there is more to it than the basic support & care of a child placed in a home? What happens when the care for a child requires a parent to stay at home or miss work, due to the extent of care that is needed? When a child placed in care has needs that require extra supervision or there is more demand on the home from difficulty of care, then a licensed home may be considered for a *Difficulty of Care Augmented Rate*.

When a child has needs that require extra supervision or more demand from difficulty of care, then a licensed home may qualify for a *Difficulty of Care Augmented Rate*.

Difficulty of Care Augmented Rates are not an automatic option for challenging behaviors or an increase in transportation resulting from school, appointments and family contact; rather *Difficulty of Care Augmented Rates* come under consideration when a child's level of care exceeds that of a basic level of care that a licensed foster home should be providing. Remember, a basic level of care "includes food, clothing replacement, shelter, daily supervision, personal and grooming supplies, school supplies, regular school activities, age-appropriate games, toys, books, general recreation, an allowance, babysitting, first aid supplies..."(Alaska Resource Family Handbook). If a child is on a Medicaid Waiver, has a pending application, if they are receiving extensive services aside

from school, or if a foster parent is already receiving funding from another program, then the child will only qualify for the basic rate.

CHANGES TO THE AUGMENTED RATES SYSTEM

OCS has made some recent changes to regulations in regard to how a child may be assessed and qualify for difficulty of care. In short, OCS must use particular guidelines to assess for augmented rates; assessments are “determined on an individual basis and pre-authorization is required.” The following is a list of problem areas to assess a placement for augmented rates and must be present within the last six months:

- **A youth in placement has a court record for delinquency**
- **A child in placement has challenges with self-regulation**
- **A child in placement has developmental delay or intellectual disability**
- **A child’s school performance with or without disciplinary issues**
- **Impulsive or oppositional behavior**
- **Enuresis / Encopresis for a child over the age of 4**
- **Therapeutic intervention or Mental Health**
- **Aggression or Victimization**
- **Medical or Physical**
- **Self-Harm or Suicide**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Teen parent and a baby placed in same home, or teen placed is in her second trimester**



HOW TO REQUEST AUGEMENTED RATES:

Requests for a Difficulty of Care Rate Assessment can be made to the Special Needs Hotline which can be reached at 1-855-60-FUNDS. (1-855-603-8637) or hss.ocsservicearray@alaska.gov. The request can be made by a birth parent, the current foster parent, the PSS, an attorney that is party to the case, or the child’s Guardian ad Litem. Determination for *Difficulty of Care Augmentation Rate* is made by identifying specific needs and behaviors in children that are above and beyond the expected base level of care. Included in this assessment is distinguishing between a *change in rate for care & supervision beyond basic care* and *requests for funds* to support on-going or one-time expenditures. Augmented rates are long-term, whereas a request for funds for expenditures is short-term. If a request is made, OCS will complete the assessment within 30 days through the Placement Search and Support Unit. The resource family will be contacted directly to complete the assessment, the rate setting will be determined, and then sent to the primary caseworker’s supervisor for approval. Once approved, the rate will be set and the resource family will receive a letter in the mail detailing the rate and their due process if they choose to appeal.

OCS: Special Needs Hotline

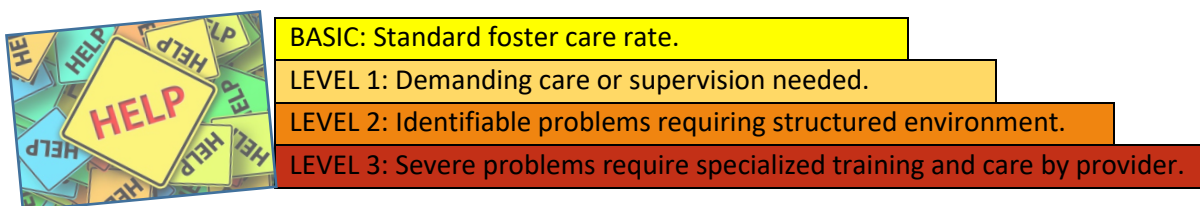
1-855-60-FUNDS. (1-855-603-8637)

or

hss.ocsservicearray@alaska.gov

A graphic of a telephone handset is shown in a light yellow box. The handset is black and has a speech bubble coming from it. The speech bubble contains the contact information for the OCS Special Needs Hotline.

OCS uses a rate setting in ORCA, the State’s database system used to track and monitor all cases. There are four levels of care when determining augmented rates: Basic, Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. These levels categorize the frequency and severity of problems or behaviors being assessed. *Basic* care is the standard foster care rate; *Level 1* care is a level of care where the child has identified special needs that require more demanding care & supervision; *Level 2* care is a level of care where a child has identifiably severe problems that require a structured environment and their needs cannot be met under basic or specialized care; *Level 3* care is a level of care where severe problems require specialized training by the care provider, and a structured environment and their needs are more than can be provided through basic or Level 1 and Level 2 care, but residential placement is not required to meet their needs.



An additional regulation change allows for the use of *Intensive Augmented Rates* by OCS as a considered support to licensed foster homes. *Intensive Augmented Rates* are used in cases where a child or youth has a pending application for the Medicaid Waiver, was on a waitlist for waiver services or was receiving waiver services that still did not fully meet the needs of the child or youth. Now, a child or youth that does not qualify for waiver services, but still exhibits complex needs (intellectual, neurobehavioral, physical aggression, or maladaptive sexualized behaviors) can potentially qualify for an intensive augmentation. Resource Families may request that their child be considered and assessed for *Intensive Augmented Rates* through the OCS Medical Mental Health Unit.

For a sample of the assessment areas, please visit: [Assessment for Difficulty of Care](#) This link will take you to a chart showing where severity of problems and behaviors fall on the rate scale.

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