

Chapter 7

BABYSITTING AND OVERNIGHT CARE

7-1. Purpose. This chapter describes the Department's policies and procedures regarding children in out-of-home care and babysitting. While normalcy focuses on allowing children to participate fully in normal childhood activities and outings, it is the position of the Department of Children and Families that out-of-home caregivers should be supported to function as normal as possible.

7-2. Scope. The policies and procedures within this operating procedure apply to all staff of the Department, Community-Based Care lead agencies and subcontracted providers involved with children in out-of-home care. This includes child protective investigators, case managers, Children's Legal Services attorneys, foster families, relatives, nonrelatives and Department program specialists. Local policies must not be more restrictive than the policies and procedures outlined in this chapter.

7-3. Babysitting Overview.

- a. Babysitting does not include overnight care or daily childcare.
- b. Babysitting does not have to occur in a licensed setting and background screening is not required.
- c. Caregivers should use the reasonable and prudent parent standard when choosing babysitters for children placed in their care. Caregivers will ensure:
 - (1) Babysitter is suitable and appropriate for the age, developmental level, and behaviors of the child.
 - (2) Babysitter receives guidance on handling emergencies, including telephone numbers for themselves, child welfare professional, and physicians.
 - (3) Discipline and confidentiality policies for the child have been fully explained.
 - (4) Water safety precautions have been explained.
 - (5) Babysitters must be age 14 or older.
- d. Caregivers shall use the reasonable and prudent parenting standard when assessing a child's ability to stay home alone. Examples of factors to be considered by the caregiver include:
 - (1) Physical and developmental age.
 - (2) Child's knowledge of safety rules, emergency contacts and comfort level.
 - (3) Child's history of trauma and reasons for entry into care.
 - (4) Child's treatment recommendations and needs.

7-4. Overnight Care.

- a. Caregivers may allow a family or person who is well known to them to provide care for children placed in their care overnight.
- b. Caregivers shall utilize the reasonable and prudent parent standard when selecting substitute care.

c. Substitute caregivers chosen by the caregiver for babysitting will be background screened for all stays exceeding three (3) nights. When the substitute caregiver is utilized due to unexpected circumstances, background screening will be initiated within one (1) business day.

d. Caregivers shall notify the assigned child welfare professional in advance of all overnight stays exceeding three (3) nights.

e. The assigned child welfare professional shall consult with the supervisor and other involved parties, such as the Guardian Ad Litem, when the overnight stay needs to exceed seven (7) nights. When relevant, agreement by all parties shall be documented by the child welfare professional in Florida Safe Families Network.

f. Caregivers shall ensure that the assigned child welfare professional can contact them at all times regarding the location and needs of the child.