

CAREGIVER'S ABILITY TO ARRANGE FOR CARE AND SUPERVISION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What does "occasional" mean? Is a caregiver limited to a certain number of outings per week? Per month?

“Occasional” does not refer to a specific pre-defined frequency or number of occasions that a caregiver arranges for babysitting or alternative care for a child who has been placed in his or her care. The caregiver should use his or her best judgment in determining what constitutes “occasional.” Some examples of occasional uses could be the opportunity to attend a birthday party, a hair appointment, or a doctor’s appointment. If in doubt, a caregiver should examine the frequency and duration of his or her outings, and ask himself or herself whether they would seem reasonable to a typical parent.

2. How does a caregiver decide which kind of temporary care is appropriate?

Each kind of temporary care is best suited for a particular range of circumstances; therefore, the kind of alternative care that should be used will be dependent upon the situation at hand. The following chart, which compares various criteria for each kind of alternative care, may be useful in determining which is most appropriate.

	Babysitter (in-or out-of-home, up to 24 hours)	Alternative Caregiver (in-home, 24 to 72 hours*)	Respite Care (out-of-home, 24 to 72 hours)
Individual (must be over 18)	No	Yes	Yes
Individual (must be licensed)	No	No [†]	Yes
Caseworker approval required	No	Yes*	Yes

* Alternative care may be for longer than 72 hours, upon approval of the child’s caseworker.

[†] Criminal record and Child Abuse Central Index clearances are required for alternative caregivers.

3. What if a caregiver expects to be absent for more than 72 hours but cannot find an alternative caregiver to come to his or her home to provide care? Can respite care be utilized instead?

No, respite care is limited to a 72-hour period. If a caregiver expects to be gone for a longer period of time, and is unable to arrange for alternative care to be provided in his or her home, he or she should discuss the matter with the child’s caseworker to make arrangements that are in the child’s best interest.

4. Can a caregiver leave a child in foster care in the care of a crisis nursery?

No, a crisis nursery provides emergency short-term care for parents or legal guardians who need a respite from the stress of parenting. For foster caregivers, this function is fulfilled by respite care. A caregiver who needs a brief break from the responsibilities of caring for a child, who has been placed in his or her care, should arrange for respite care services.

5. If a caregiver determines that a child, who has been placed in his or her care, is old enough and mature enough to be left alone overnight, may he or she do so?

No. Although it might seem to be normal to do so with older children, regulations do not allow a child in foster care to be left unsupervised overnight, regardless of the child's age or level of maturity. This restriction is not subject to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. If questioned, the caregiver may want to make clear to the child in foster care that this is a legal requirement and therefore, the caregiver does not have discretion to do otherwise.

6. Is alternative care needed when a child in foster care participates in extracurricular activities that last for an extended period of time (over 24 hours)?

No. Children in foster care may (and are encouraged to) participate in extracurricular activities, including those which may take the child away from the caregiver's home for an extended period of time (such as school field trips, camping trips, sporting events, etc.). Depending on the duration and amount of travel involved, approval by the child's caseworker or the juvenile court may be required; however, these situations are not considered ones in which alternative care applies.