



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

DATE: January 20, 2012
TO: Regional Directors, Community-Based Care Chief Executive Officers
FROM: David E. Wilkins, Secretary *aw*
SUBJECT: Normalcy

The most important job we have in child welfare is to protect a young person's opportunity to have a healthy, normal childhood. We hope we can do this while the child remains with his or her family. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Sometimes children must be cared for by other families. When this happens we do not want the child, who has already suffered the loss of his or her loved ones, to also lose the opportunity to interact normally with friends and the community.

I want to emphasize rule language {65C-13.029(1)(g)7.} that states:

"Children in licensed out-of-home care shall be afforded every opportunity for social development, recreation, and normalization of their lives."

and rule language {65C-13.029(1)(g)9.}:

"The licensed out-of-home caregiver may allow foster children to experience circumstances without adult supervision depending on the child's age, maturity, and ability to make appropriate decisions. "

Over the past few years, we have focused our efforts on ensuring that licensed caregivers are willing and able to provide quality parenting to our children. Quality parenting means finding ways to say "yes" to the opportunities of childhood unless there are genuine barriers or realistic concerns about the child's safety or well being. Don't say "no" because it's easier for managing the risk of "what if." Rather than simply erring on the side of caution, we should err on the side of the child's healthy development while using common sense and our best personal and professional judgment, as if the child was our own.

This administration will fully and completely support the efforts of caregivers, providers and CBCs to ensure that children in our care have the opportunity to fully participate in activities in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

Thank you for sharing this with caregivers and staff.

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency