

## **Findings**

Foster families feel more or less at ease in the choice of certain rules of conduct to be applied regarding children placed. It therefore seems important that the Centre jeunesse Estrie provide guidelines for the rules of functioning, concerning for example; smoking, going out, sleepovers, sexual relations, hitch-hiking, etc...

In this sense, a tool which guides their interventions allows common points of reference in order to facilitate interventions towards children placed.

## **Specific Objectives**

Make precise, for each theme, the establishment's position while considering the foster child's need for protection and also, the foster family feeling at ease in applying the intervention;

Favor coherence of foster family interventions with those of the CJGI worker.

## **Basic Principles**

We must be aware of our level of tolerance and not forget that the children must live in conditions which are favorable to their protection;

When it is obvious that a situation or behavior may put the child's development or security in danger, it must not be allowed;

Also, when an act is considered illegal, it must not be allowed by the foster family;

We ask the foster family to play an educational role as well as one of surveillance, accompaniment and structure with regards to the child placed.

The foster family and the worker must take into consideration what the natural parents agree or disagree with. Following that, the worker must judge if it is considered relevant for the child;

The foster family and the worker should always consult before communicating a position to the child and take the time to do so even if the child is demanding an immediate answer.

***Principle points of  
reference for workers and  
foster families***

**Tobacco use in children placed in foster families**

The C.J.G.I. must :

- promote health for all users
- encourage good habits regarding health matters

Consequently, the primary role of the foster family with regards to tobacco use in youth, is one of education and awareness. The foster family must not facilitate the use of tobacco in youth, in that they way even limit the place, the time and the number of cigarettes after having discussed the issue with the youth and the worker.

The foster family and the worker must discuss the effects of tobacco use with the youth.

When the situation is presented, we should speak in terms that the youth can relate to (we can suggest the effect on sports performance for example, for those who are interested in physical activities, inform him or her of the effects of tobacco use on health in general, etc ... ).

Before allowing a youth to smoke in the foster family, a written authorization from the parent is necessary.

The parents are responsible for the furnishes tobacco to the youth, it is the foster family who manages the distribution. When the parent authorize the youth to smoke.

If the parent does not give authorization to the child to smoke, the foster family should respect this decision.

## **Drug consumption**

The foster family does not have to tolerate in any way, the consuming or sale of illegal drugs, not inside or outside the home. When such a situation is brought to the attention of the foster family, it must immediately notify the worker responsible for the child.

In case of doubt or knowledge that a child is consuming drugs, the foster family and the worker for the child from the C.J.G.I. mutually communicate the information. The youth must also be put aware that the foster family and the worker know about the situation concerning the drugs. This is with the objective of intervening in a clear and coherent fashion, and of offering the youth different possibilities for help from significant adults.

## **Alcohol consumption**

The foster family, when faced with this issue, plays an educational role. It is important for the foster family to provide follow-up to the child, to explore what the child is experiencing, and his or her behavior with regards to alcohol. In this sense, certain special occasions (Christmas, etc.) can serve as examples to associate alcohol consumption with moderation.

If the foster family detects a problem with alcohol, it must discuss the matter with the youth and the worker in collaboration with the natural parents. Its role is to make the child responsible concerning possible abuse of alcohol and regular repetitive use that would lead to a long term problem.

The foster family can help the youth in identifying the cause of consumption (example: pleasure, escape from a problem, etc.) and look for other ways, with the youth, to meet his or her needs.

The foster family's position with regards to alcohol consumption must be the following:

- do not promote the need;
- moderation;
- danger of abuse and repetition;
- consequences regarding the law (example: driving in a drunken state).

In a situation of alcohol abuse, the foster family must act with calm while the youth is in this state of drunkenness and ask for help if the situation so requires. Following that, it would have to identify the cause for such abuse and intervene in a sense so as to make the child more responsible.

Before the problem is repeated and it becomes a symptom of other problems, the foster family must discuss with the worker in order to treat the situation. Usually, at that time, other aspects of the youth's life are affected.

Concerning the level of tolerance that a foster family can have or not, when a youth asks to consume alcohol, on occasion for example during an evening with friends at the foster family's , it may be allowed with the following conditions:

- the foster family is at ease in such a situation (the foster family is not obliged to allow this);
- permission accorded only at the youth's request, him or herself, without suggestion from the foster family;
- that the youth be at least 16 years of age;
- **fix a limit** for the quantity of alcohol to be consumed during the evening;

- **establish, at the very start, the consequences** and make them clear for not respecting the limits (for example: if there is a problem with the nonrespecting of the limit then there will be no further permission for parties at the house);
- make the youth responsible with regards to his or her behavior and that of his or her friends that are invited (for example: the youth would have to intervene him/herself if a friend wanted to bring in alcohol);
- assure that there is an adult present at the house during such an occasion;
- evaluate with the worker, the youth's sense of responsibility, and maturity;
- the worker assures that the natural parents are in agreement with this.

When the situation is one of evenings in another family, the foster families, in consultation with the worker, must be sure that the "responsible" adults are reliable. The conditions in place for the presence of the youth will be the same as previously mentioned for the house parties. It is possible for the foster family to verify the presence of adults during this evening by a phone call or by assuring the transportation to and from the party, for example.

Regarding evenings outside the foster family and where there is alcohol (example: St. Jean bon fire, corn roast), the family can authorize such outings if it judges that the milieu is adequate and with certain conditions:

Set rules (hour of return, not allowed to consume alcohol) :

- if need be, assume the transportation or ask other responsible adults to do so;
- can show up to verify (without necessarily following the youth in all his outings ... )
- clearly inform the youth that if he or she does not respect the rules of the foster family, he or she will have to assume the consequences.

If the foster family has doubts of consumption when the youth is visiting the natural parents, it must inform the worker responsible for the youth.

### **Frequenting an establishment that sells alcohol**

According to the law, a youth less than 18 years of age cannot, in any case buy alcohol or find him/herself in an establishment where alcohol is served.

The worker and the foster family must not agree or authorize to the youth to act illegally. When this situation presents itself, the message from the worker and or the foster family regarding this subject must be clear and without ambiguity.

If need be, the worker and/or the foster family inform and discuss the youth's responsibilities, with him/her as well as the risks involved and the possible consequences if he/she breaks this law.

### **Hitchhiking**

The foster family must not authorize a youth to hitch-hike. They must play a role of surveillance and control regarding the youth's comings and goings and must respect the contract to make available a means of transportation for the child's regular comings and goings.

### **Adolescent's sex and love life**

The foster family's role is to favor the healthy and responsible development of sexuality, and to intervene in matters of prevention in the context of sexual relations of youths placed.

A youth who is placed has the same sexuality as other adolescents. However, considering the numerous difficulties they may have encountered, the presence of adults that may help and structure them, takes on great importance.

Nowadays, many adolescents already have an active sex life. Whether we like it or not, this reality exists and will not disappear by us denying it or disapproving of it.

The foster family's approach and the interventions with regards to the sex and love life of a youth placed, must take into account:

- his/her evolution and functioning (maturity, judgment, behavior);
- the stability in the adolescent's love/sex life;
- what is indicated in the intervention plan
- the natural parent's opinion.

Finally, a foster family must feel at ease in the choice of interventions taken because they may be confronted in their own parental values regarding this question.

### **The company they keep**

As for friends and those the child "hangs out" with in general, the foster family must always assure that the friends are "O.K.". It must also verify the impact of these friends on the development and functioning of the child, in regular activities (school,

family and social) and see that necessary rules are established concerning, among others, the hours to come in and the places where the child goes.

If the foster family judges that someone is not recommendable, for example, because the friend has a negative influence (encourages the consuming of drugs/alcohol), too much of an age difference, or that it is judged to be dangerous and/or to have a negative impact on the development of the child, the foster family informs the worker. The natural parents are therefore consulted and, following this step, they can be asked that the child put an end to the "friendship". If the child does not respect this decision, the worker can ask the Court to legally prohibit the contact.

### **Sleep-overs outside the foster family (excluding the natural family milieu)**

The foster family exercises certain parental obligations, that is, the obligation to watch over, look after and educate. The natural parents remain however those firstly responsible for the child and must be informed when the child asks to sleep in a milieu other than the natural milieu. The foster family and the worker must assure the child's protection in this other milieu, that is, they must know them or go to visit to assure that the receiving family is adequate whenever necessary. In order to make "normal" the life of a child placed the CJGI favors that this step be taken by the foster family if they feel at ease about it.

### **They must ask the receiving family**

- If they are aware of the plan for the evening;
- What they think of it;
- If they can assure a presence, watch over, and control if need be;
- To be contacted if necessary.

The worker from the CJGI can also take these steps. Agreements can be taken between the foster family and the worker regarding this subject, (example: verify if all is adequate, number of sleep-overs, etc.) so as not to have to re-contact each other every time.

The CJGI also encourages the foster family, depending on their willingness, to welcome from time to time, some of the child's friends to sleep over, this may contribute to a normal lifestyle for the child placed.

## **Outings**

There are two (2) kinds of outings: the organized outing requiring a type of commitment from the child (example: sports, planned cultural activities, etc.) and the free time activity where the child is with his or her friends for example.

The foster family must know the grace and the people who the child is with and the hour of return for each free activity. The permissions to be accorded, the frequency and the length of the outings depend on the age and the maturity of the child.

The schedule of the child's outings must allow him or her to maintain a certain harmony and balance. The emphasis must especially be put on :

- the school aspect, that is, that the foster family see that the child's homework is really done before he or she tends to other things;
- the family life, that is that the investment in the bond to be created between the child and the foster family allow a constructive relationship.

Following the taking into account of these two (2) aspects of life, the time left over can be used for either structured or free activities. The foster family can participate by stimulating the child and accompanying him/her sometimes when the activity allows this.

The proper functioning of the child in school, family and social life allows him/her to take decisions by him/herself while allowing the foster family to play a role of guide, encouraging autonomy.

It is to be noted that bedtimes mentioned in the following point, serve as guidelines concerning the time and hours for outings.

## **Schedule for bedtimes for the child and adolescent**

These are approximate times to be used as reference points. We encourage progressive changes. When we speak of bedtime, we understand that at this time the child is in his/her room.

Up till the age of 6 years, the child needs approximately twelve (12) hours of sleep per night in order to function well in the day.

<b>Age summer</b>	<b>Bedtime-school year</b>	<b>Bedtime on weekends and in</b>
<b>6-7 years</b>	<b>20h00 (8:00 PM) (respect around</b>	<b>21h00 (9:00 PM)</b>

**10 hours of sleep per night)**

<b>8-9 years</b>	<b>20h30 (8:30 PM)</b>	<b>21h30 (9:30 PM)</b>
<b>10-11 years</b>	<b>21h00 (9:00 PM)</b>	<b>22h00 (10:00 PM)</b>
<b>12-13 years</b>	<b>21h30 (9:30 PM)</b>	<b>22h30 (10:30 PM)</b>
<b>14-15 years</b>	<b>22h00 (10:00 PM)</b>	<b>23h00 (11:00 PM)</b>
<b>16-17 years</b>	<b>22h30 (10:30 PM)</b>	<b>24h00 (12:00 PM)</b>

\*\*We leave a lot of flexibility to the adolescent at this age, especially when he or she is at the house, in order to help explore his or her limits and to make him or her more responsible. We are observers of the results of the youth's decisions in his or her different spheres of functioning. This observation aims at determining the nature of the accompaniment and/or structure required by the situation at the following levels:

- school;
- impact of the youth's decisions on family life;
- social functioning (example: stopped by the police, excess of drinking or drugs, irresponsible sexual behavior, etc.);
- physical state;
- psychological state.

Structure can bring about greater restrictions and this structure should be assured in a rehabilitation unit if the foster family cannot assure it.

### **Visits of the natural parents in the foster home**

According to the needs of the child and those of the intervention plan, it may be asked of the foster family to receive the natural family. The foster family must therefore accept according to their contract. It can participate in the organizing of these meetings. The natural family must respect these rules.

When the visits are recommended and the natural family does not respect the established schedule, the worker must make an agreement, concerning the time of visits, with the natural parent. If this is not respected, the worker must be notified.

The worker can decide that the child visits his or her parents in their home if we note the natural family's tendency to be dependent on the foster family or if there is inadequate functioning during the visits which could hinder the intervention plan

objectives. This must be discussed with the foster family before taking such a decision.

When the functioning of the natural family does not allow visits in the foster family because this may negatively affect the level of functioning with the child and the foster family, the worker can decide to organize supervised visits. These can take place outside the foster home.

If the natural family shows up in a state considered unacceptable to be received by the foster family (example: drunk, aggressive), the foster family can call the C.J.G.I. emergency service or the police. If the police are contacted first the C.J.G.I. must be contacted as soon as possible afterwards in order to inform the worker of the situation.

### **Which chores are normally asked of the child or adolescent in foster home**

Regarding the chores in the home, the workers and the foster family see to encouraging the child's autonomy and his or her acquiring of a sense of responsibility. In this sense, it is encouraged that the distribution of chores concern **all** the family members, no matter their gender or their rank. This refers to a sharing of responsibilities which is **adapted according to the child's abilities and age.**

The adult who is considered responsible encourages and supports the child. He or she accompanies the child by, among other things, participating him or herself in the different chores. Participation must be encouraged while maintaining flexibility in negotiations.

Children placed arrive in the foster family with their own way of functioning. It may happen that the child is stubborn regarding chores. The intervention plan should be made so as to allow a gradual evolution. It should be made clear with the child, at the beginning of placement, that the foster family will work with him or her so that he/she develops autonomy which includes being able to do certain chores in the home. Occasionally, for certain chores, it is possible to give the child a little money which may serve to motivate and provide some extra spending money.

The child must evolve gradually concerning chores given. These chores are firstly those which directly affect him/her (example: make his/her bed, pick up his/her toys, keep his/her bedroom clean) and then he/she may participate in doing common chores in the house.

Here are some guidelines and reference points according to age :

### **Up to the age of 5 years :**

Encourage feelings of self-worth regarding work, use games and teach the child to associate work with pleasure.

The child can learn to pick up the toys, make the bed, gradually take care of his/her personal space, the bedroom;  
Participation in common chores when he/she takes the initiative to do so;  
Compensation is very appreciated and motivates.

### **From 5 to 11 years :**

Priority is given to school responsibilities, then, some household chores and lastly leisure activities;  
Again we encourage bedroom maintenance before common chores;  
Occasional compensation for special chores motivates the child.

### **From 12 to 17 years :**

Same priorities as those for 5 to 11 years;

Because the youth has a greater need for affirmation at this age, the foster family should try to **respect the youth's personal space.** We can therefore come to an agreement about an "acceptable minimum" regarding maintaining his/her bedroom for example;

We add some supple negotiation for common chores. We make the youth aware of the respect we should have for shared areas within the home;

It is always important that the foster family participate too while at the same time leaving certain responsibilities to the youth.

When a particular problem arises, the foster family must discuss it with the Centre Jeunesse worker in order to find new solutions. For example, when repetition sets in and the foster family finds itself always saying the same thing to the child, it becomes important to try to think of different ways to intervene in order to break the vicious circle.

It is to be noted that in the case of school problems, this element becomes a priority, which may implicate lessening the chores at home in order to be able to invest more time in studying while maintaining an acceptable amount of leisure time.

### **When the child calls the foster parents "mom" and "dad"**

There is a difference between being called mom and dad and letting oneself be called mom or dad. We have to respect the child's need but without urging it. It is important to tell the truth to the child when the situation presents itself, that is that he/she has natural parents and that we are the foster family, and then respect his/her need and his/her decision.

The child's need to call the foster family mom and dad may be caused by :

- denial regarding placement;
- the wish to be like the other children in the family;
- the need to identify and feel secure, which is totally normal.

Certain motives justify that we be prudent when the child calls the foster family mom and dad. Here are some:

- legal acknowledgment of parental rights;
- working towards the child's return in the natural milieu;
- the child may feel confused finding him/herself in a conflict of loyalty facing his/her natural parents, which can, at one time or another, cause problems in the relationship with the foster family.

**Do we allow that the children entrusted to a foster family baby-sit the foster family's younger children? If so, at what age and for what length of time?**

The most important aspect to be considered before allowing an adolescent to baby-sit younger children, is his/her degree of maturity. Here are a few reference points:

- the youth must not have behavior problems;
- he or she must be able to take care of him/herself without needing continual surveillance;
- he/she must maintain a good relationship with the children being kept;
- he/she must show the ability to protect a child younger than him/herself.

We can evaluate the ability of the youth to baby-sit by giving him/her extra responsibilities regarding the younger children while we are present, and observe how he/she does.

If we judged that the adolescent can baby-sit, we could leave the house for short periods of time, at less demanding moments, the evening for example, when the children are asleep. We would see that the youth has information with regards to a reliable adult (name and phone number) who could intervene if need be. We would furnish him/her with the information which can be used in case of an emergency (example: number of the hospital, ambulance, fire department, poison control center,

etc.) We would provide clear guidelines for use of material in the house. If we would be gone during mealtime, it is preferable to leave a meal ready, easy to serve.

If the youth baby-sits quite regularly, we could provide compensation. In this case, the Centre Jeunesse asks to be informed in order to share in taking the decision.

When the adolescent baby-sits on a regular basis and for long enough periods, it is recommended that he/she follow the baby-sitting course set up by the local health centers (ex. C. L.S.C.).

The minimum age suggested for baby-sitting for short periods, is 12 years old. This must not, however be considered before having properly evaluated the youth's degree of maturity which is the determining factor in his/her ability to baby-sit.

### **The witnessing of foster families at Court**

Because of their implication in the treatment and care for children, the foster families have precious information on the life of the child for whom they have responsibility.

This information can be useful to the Court before a decision regarding the child's future is taken.

In this context, the foster families can be called upon to be present before the Court to witness for particular facts regarding the child or his/her parents. The worker for the child forewarns the foster family and the lawyer for the Centre jeunesse prepares the foster family before the hearing.

The youth protection direction, by their lawyer, must prove what is put forth and it is within this framework that the witnessing of a foster family can become essential in order to obtain the requested protection measure. Insofar as possible and when they consider that they are not putting the proof at risk, the lawyers from the Y.P.D. make an effort so that the foster families do not have to be present before the court. One of the ways favored is that the worker in the file be able to bring all the relevant information to the Court.

In any case where a foster family receives a request to go to Court, it must immediately notify the worker responsible for the child before doing anything.

It must never transmit information on the child and the parents to other persons, only the worker or the lawyer for the Y.P.D.. Receiving a request to be present at Court does not authorize them to give out information before being in front of the judge.

### **How should the foster family assume expenses regarding the base rate that it receives for the child?**

The foster family has the responsibility of assuming certain expenses related to the base rate that it receives for a child.

The minister of health and social services wanted to be sure of uniform application/distribution in each region of Quebec by suggesting amounts to foster families regarding clothing, leisure and pocket money as well as school supplies.

The amounts which are identified according to the different items of expenses, are suggested.

The foster family has a certain flexibility in choosing the means necessary for carrying out its responsibilities.

A child or adolescent cannot demand that the foster family give him/her amounts of money. It is up to the foster family to determine the way in which expenses will take place.

The foster family and the worker for the child can look at their method together.

### **Structuring of the youth**

As those responsible for the education of the youth, it is important that the foster family have a choice of means for providing structure. The educational means must be adapted and proportioned to the different situations.

Regarding physical correction, it is important to make precise that the foster family cannot use this type of method towards a child and this, no matter the situation or age of the child.

The foster family may however have to stop the child's "acting-out" which is different from physical punishment. Stopping the acting-out, is to physically maintain the person without using violent gestures. This means can be used to assure the child's protection and that of those around, when his/her own security and that of others is in danger.

If a foster family should experience a loss of control towards a child placed, the foster family is asked to communicate the situation to the Centre jeunesse in order to discuss it and find other solutions.

## **Telephone use**

The foster family does not have to assume the telephone charges for the youth. These are paid with the pocket money.

When contact between the child and his/her **natural family** necessitates telephone charges, the foster family informs the worker in order that certain agreements be taken between the Centre jeunesse and the natural family. The foster family and the child agree on the length and frequency of the regular calls (friends).

## **House key given to the child**

The child who is under 10 years of age, not having to remain alone at the house, does not need a key.

The key can be given with the goal of "normalizing" when the foster family's children have a key and the child proves his/her sense of responsibility, after a certain length of time in placement.

The prerequisite is that the youth acquire the adult's confidence and this, before considering the practicality aspect.

## **Confidentiality**

According to article 30.16 of the foster family contract, the foster family must respect confidentiality :

***The foster family must respect confidentiality regarding an information concerning the users placed and their family situation.***

This article signifies that you should, at all times, and facing anyone (neighbors, relatives, friends, other professionals for whom the worker has not told you to give out information to), respect confidentiality of information that you have on the child and on his/her family situation.

**If however** information must be given in specific situations (ex. hospital, school, day care, etc.), the type of information must always be considered, and we only give answers to questions regarding the "daily life" needs of the child (ex. the child was absent from school, we give the reason; the day care center needs to know if the child has allergies, we give this information as well).

If information is requested from another lawyer than that of the Y.P.D. or any other request for access to information, the foster family must refer the person to the worker responsible for the child, or to the immediate supervisor (for all questions concerning the child, the parents or the situation in general).

All information communicated to the foster family by a third party or by the child him/herself, which has an impact on the child's development, must be shared with the worker. Also, any information concerning the child which risks to put in danger members of the foster family or any other person must be communicated to the worker.

## **Authorizations**

When the child is sick or hurt and requires medical attention, the foster family can ask admission to hospital but it can, in no way, and, in no situations, sign an authorization for surgery or anesthesia. In these extreme situations, it is up to the doctor treating the child to exercise his/her authority in order to proceed with the required care.

Within the Quebec health system, any adolescent aged 14 years or older has the right to obtain medical care without the natural parents, or tutor's permission.

There is a form that exists at the Centre jeunesse which can be signed by the natural parents authorizing the foster family to obtain regular medical care for the child, as well as allowing school outings, day camps, visits to the secondary residence of the foster family and other possibilities for leisure time and activities normally offered to children. You can contact the worker for the child at the Centre jeunesse to receive a copy of this form signed by the natural parents.

As far as obtaining a driver's permit, only the natural parents, the tutor, or the person holding parental authority can accord authorization.