

<b>Division of Children and Family Services Protection and Safety Procedure #2-2016</b>	
Regarding:	Clarification of Foster Care Reimbursement Rates and the Use of the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool; Rescinds use of the Child and Adolescent Strengths and Needs Assessment (CANS) in pilot areas (Update #4-2015)
Date Effective:	01/21/2016
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Issue by:	Douglas J. Weinberg, Director, Division of Children and Family Services



**Philosophy:**

When children cannot reside safely in their own homes, foster parents provide a safe, stable and nurturing home for children. Foster Parents may be relatives to the child (ren), (except stepparents or parents whose rights were previously terminated), kinship to the child (ren) (persons unrelated but having a significant prior relationship), and adult siblings of the child (ren); and, foster parents may be licensed or unlicensed.

**Procedure:**

In order to determine the rate at which a foster parent is reimbursed for the care of a child placed in their home, two documents must be completed by the CFS Specialist:

- (1) The Structured Decision Making Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) and,
- (2) The Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool (NCR).

The CFS Specialist shall first complete the FSNA to determine the child’s needs and document these within N-FOCUS. The FSNA is entered into N-FOCUS directly. The CFS Specialist will then complete the NCR Tool to document the care and effort the foster parent is making to meet the child’s needs. The FSNA **and** the NCR must be completed by no later than thirty calendar days after the child’s **initial placement**. If the child moves from one foster home to another foster home **within thirty days of the initial removal**, an NCR is not required for the initial foster home. However, **the FSNA and the NCR are required to be completed on the second foster home within thirty days of initial removal.**

The Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool describes eight areas of care:

- (1) Medical/Physical Health and Well-Being;
- (2) Family Relationships/Cultural Identity;
- (3) Supervision/Structure/Behavioral and Emotional;
- (4) Education/Cognitive Development;

- (5) Socialization/Age Appropriate Expectations;
- (6) Support/Nurturance/Well-Being;
- (7) Placement Stability; and
- (8) Transition to Permanency and/or Independent Living.

Within each of the eight areas of care are three levels. Whenever a Level 2 or Level 3 ranking is selected under one of the areas of care, the CFS Specialist must describe and document in narrative on the NCR Form under the section "Outline the Caregiver Responsibilities," the additional care the foster parent has committed to provide that supports a Level 2 or Level 3 ranking in each area of care. The documentation must describe the specific activities that the foster parent(s) will engage in that meet the definition of a Level 2 or Level 3 ranking, including intensity and frequency of those activities. Whenever a Level 1 ranking is selected under one of the areas of care, additional documentation is not necessary.

The CFS Specialist will complete the NCR Tool during a face to face meeting with the foster parent (s), and will invite the foster care agency representative if the foster parent is supported by a contracted agency. The CFS Specialist, foster parent(s), and foster care agency representative (when present), must sign and date the NCR Tool to document their participation in the completion of the tool. The CFS Specialist will then present the signed NCR Tool to his or her supervisor, or the supervisor's designee, for supervisory review, approval, and signature. Once the supervisor or the supervisor's designee has signed and dated the NCR Tool, it must be scanned into N-FOCUS under the child's name in the Placement Section, and also entered directly into N-FOCUS under the Payment Determination icon within the CFS program case. When a new payment amount is determined, the date of the supervisor's signature verifying approval of the completed NCR will be the date used to begin the new payment.

The only exception to a face to face meeting to complete the NCR Tool is when the child is placed in a foster home outside of Nebraska. If the child is placed outside of Nebraska, the completion of the NCR Tool may occur via a telephone conference call with the foster parent, the CFS Specialist, and the foster care agency representative if applicable. The CFS Specialist shall document, in the narrative section of N-FOCUS, the date and time of the telephone conference call and who was present on the telephone conference call.

The level of parenting the foster parent agrees to provide, along with the age of the child, will determine the daily reimbursement rate calculated through N-FOCUS.

**Children Initially Removed and Placed in Foster Care:**

When a child is initially removed from his or her home and placed in foster care, the foster parent will be reimbursed at the essential rate for the child's age.

The CFS Specialist and the CFS Supervisor, or the supervisor's designee, has a maximum of thirty (30) calendar days from the date of placement to complete all of the following:

- (1) The FSNA to assess the child's needs; and,
- (2) The NCR Tool to determine if a higher level of parenting will be provided by the foster parent to meet the unique needs of the child; and,
- (3) Sign and date the hard copy of the NCR Tool; and,

- (4) Enter the NCR Tool on N-FOCUS; and,
- (5) Finalize the NCR Tool on N-FOCUS (by the supervisor or supervisor's designee).

Upon completion of the NCR Tool, the foster parent's rate of reimbursement may be increased from the essential level of parenting to the enhanced level of parenting or to the intensive level of parenting. The increased rate of reimbursement shall be effective on the date the CFS Supervisor or the supervisor's designee approves, signs, and dates the hard copy of the NCR Tool.

The NCR Tool must be scanned into N-FOCUS only when the foster parent (s), foster care agency staff person (when present), CFS Specialist, and CFS Supervisor or the supervisor's designee have all signed and dated the NCR Tool indicating their agreement with the information contained in the tool. The assigned Income Maintenance Foster Care (IMFC) Worker will authorize the foster care reimbursement rate once the NCR Tool has been scanned into N-FOCUS with all of the required signatures, with the start date being the signature date of the CFS Supervisor or the supervisor's designee.

**Children Who Experience a Planned Placement Change:**

When a child changes placement from one foster home to another or enters a foster home from a more restrictive level of care, the child's unique strengths and needs are already known and documented on the FSNA by the CFS Specialist. The NCR Tool, however, must be completed again in order to determine the level of parenting that will be provided by the new foster parent(s).

The CFS Specialist will complete the new NCR Tool during the face to face visit with the foster parent(s) at the time the child is placed in the foster home. The CFS Specialist will include the participation of the foster parent(s), and the foster care agency representative (when present) if the foster parent is supported by a contracted foster care agency. The foster parent will be reimbursed at either the essential level of parenting, the enhanced level of parenting, or the intensive level of parenting daily rate depending on the care the foster parent has committed to provide to meet the child's unique needs.

The CFS Specialist, foster parent(s), and foster care agency representative (when present), must sign and date the NCR Tool to document their participation in the completion of the tool. The CFS Specialist will then present the signed NCR Tool to his or her Supervisor or the supervisor's designee for supervisory review, approval, and signature. Once the supervisor or supervisor's designee has signed and dated the NCR Tool, it must be scanned into N-FOCUS under the child's name in the Placement Section, and also entered directly into N-FOCUS under the Payment Determination icon within the CFS program case.

The daily rate of reimbursement calculated through N-FOCUS will be the rate authorized to pay the foster parent. The assigned Income Maintenance Foster Care (IMFC) Worker will authorize the foster care reimbursement rate once the NCR Tool has been scanned into N-FOCUS with all of the required signatures, with the start date being the signature date of the CFS Supervisor or the supervisor's designee.

**Please note:**

- (1) In situations where a child is hospitalized or runs away and returns to the **same** foster home, a new NCR Tool does not need to be completed with the foster parent unless requested. The rate of reimbursement will remain at the prior authorized rate.
- (2) If it is urgent and necessary to remove a child from a foster home placement or from his or her own home after hours, on weekends, or on holidays; and, the CFS Specialist is not able to access specific information regarding the child's needs and determine the level of parenting required to meet those needs, a CFS Specialist must meet face-to-face with the foster parent and the foster care agency representative (if applicable) to complete the NCR by the next business day following placement of the child. The CFS Specialist must then present the signed NCR Tool to his or her Supervisor or the supervisor's designee for supervisory review, approval, and signature by the next business day following placement of the child. The foster parent will be reimbursed at the essential rate for the child's age until the date the NCR Tool is completed and signed by the supervisor or the supervisor's designee.
- (3) Foster care reimbursement rates **do not transfer** from one foster parent to another.

**Additional Times When the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool will be completed:**

The Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool will also be completed within 30 calendar days at the following times:

- At the request of the Foster Parent(s);
- At the request of the Agency Supporting the Foster Parent(s);
- At the request of the Division of Children and Family Services;
- When the Permanency Plan Changes for the child;
- When the Child's circumstances change (such as a significant change in the child's needs which require the Foster Parent to provide additional care); or,
- Every six months following the date of placement unless one has been completed within the prior 6 months.

The CFS Specialist must update the NCR on N-FOCUS whenever a child turns age 6 and age 12 so that the foster care rate can be changed to reflect the correct age of the child. A new NCR is not required in these situations. As a reminder, the CFS Specialist will receive an alert from N-FOCUS one month prior to when the child turns age 6 or age 12. The assigned IMFC Worker will also receive an alert whenever a child turns age 6 or age 12, and will authorize the new foster care reimbursement rate once the NCR has been updated on N-FOCUS, with the start date being the date of the child's 6<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Foster Parent Change of Support Agency:**

If a foster parent changes their foster care support agency, **and** an NCR has already been completed with the foster parent and their prior foster care support agency, the CFS Specialist shall print a copy of that NCR and have the new foster care support agency staff sign, indicating they are in agreement with the NCR. A new NCR should only be completed when the foster



parent changes support agencies, if the foster parent indicates they would like a new one due to changes in their responsibilities.

**Exceptions to the Intensive Parenting Reimbursement Rate:**

Occasionally a child’s medical, developmental or therapeutic needs may require a higher level of care by the foster parent than the intensive level of parenting rate that the NCR Tool calculates. Whenever a higher level of care is suspected by the CFS Specialist, s/he will consult with the CFS Supervisor, the CFS Administrator and the Service Area Administrator to determine if a higher level of payment to the foster parent(s) and/or the agency supporting the foster parent(s) if applicable, should be considered. If so, the increased level of care expectations must be documented in a Letter of Agreement and sent to the Central Office Field Operations Administrator who will convene a team for approval. All approved Letters of Agreement will be monitored by DHHS-CFS.

**Completion of the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility tool prior to Adoption or Guardianship Subsidy Signing:**

In order to determine the rate of an adoption or guardianship subsidy, the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool will be completed during a face to face meeting between the CFS Specialist, the prospective adoptive parent or prospective guardian, and the foster care agency representative if applicable, within six months of the finalization of the adoption or guardianship. If the provisions of the subsidy include a maintenance payment, the daily rate of the adoption or guardianship subsidy must be less than the rate determined through the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool in accordance with 479 NAC 8-001.02C and 479 NAC 7-005.

**Foster Care Rates:**

Foster care reimbursement rates are based on the age of the child and the level of parenting the foster parent agrees to provide in order to meet the unique needs of each child in their care. The NCR Tool is used to determine the level of parenting. The rates for each level of parenting are as follows:

<b>Age:</b>	<b>Essential Parenting:</b>	<b>Enhanced Parenting:</b>	<b>Intensive Parenting:</b>
0-5	\$20.00	\$27.50	\$35.00
6-11	\$23.00	\$30.50	\$38.00
12-18	\$25.00	\$32.50	\$40.00

**Attachment:** Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool

**References:**

Nebraska Revised Statute: 43-4211 (2013)