

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting: 7 Questions for Resource Parents

When considering whether a child should participate in extracurricular, cultural, social, and enrichment activities,¹ there are seven general questions resource parents can ask themselves. These questions will help parents examine how an activity might benefit their child, impact their child's safety, and affect the family and the community. Since most states have their own guidelines for helping resource parents make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions, parents are encouraged to talk with their social worker for clarification and guidance.

1. Does the activity fit with my child's physical age and developmental level?

For an activity to be considered appropriate, resource parents should question whether it fits the child's chronological age, as well as the child's developmental level (for instance his/her emotional maturity or intellectual level). For example, say a boy is invited to a classmate's birthday party. While his classmates may be his same age, developmentally he may have difficulty functioning and feel unsafe without an adult he knows nearby.

2. What are the potential risks of this activity for my child? Is the activity appropriate?

Resource parents need to think through all the potential risks involved in the activity, remembering that what might be a risk for one child, may not be so for another. For example, in the birthday party example above, the risks may include the boy feeling overwhelmed and having an emotional outburst or getting bullied.

3. Does my child want to participate and have an interest in doing so?

Children should be encouraged to follow their interests, not just the interests of the resource parents or others. For example, if a school coach is pressuring a teen to play basketball, but the teen wants to pursue theater instead, a prudent parent would respect the teen's wishes.

In some situations, if a child seems reluctant, the parent may talk with the child about the reasons behind the decision and perhaps discuss the possibility of taking a chance. For example, if a boy enjoys making up plays and play-acting with his brothers but seems reluctant to participate in a weeklong camp, his resource parent may talk to him about why he is hesitant.

4. Will the activity have a positive impact on my child's growth and development?

Youth should be encouraged to participate in activities which lead to greater growth. When a child expresses interest in an activity, the parents should evaluate the impact on the child's growth and development. For example, if the child is interested in participating on a sport team, the benefits would include physical development and learning social skills, such as good sportsmanship.

5. Is the activity a "normal" experience, that is, would my birth or adopted children be allowed to do this?

Resource parents should consider whether the activity is something they would let their birth

or adopted children do. In other words, does this activity normalize the experiences of a child in care? For example, if resource parents allowed their birth son to begin dating at age 16, if their 16-year-old foster son asks to go on a date, they should evaluate the benefits and safety issues for him. They shouldn't limit him just because he is in care.

6. Considering my child's history, can he or she participate responsibly in the activity?

If the activity is within the child's safety plan, resource parents should consider whether the youth can responsibly participate, based on how he or she has behaved in similar situations. The caregiver may be more restrictive at first, and then allow more activities as trust is built. For example, a teenage girl may be allowed to go to a movie with friends because her resource parent has observed her and her friends behaving responsibly together.

7. How will this activity impact others?

When planning an activity for a child in care, the impact of the activity on the family – including the birth family – needs to be considered. For example, say a child in care wants to go to weekly violin lessons. This will require transportation, finances, and parent support time. The birth family will experience similar impacts when the child reunites, and so they should be consulted.

¹ Social, academic, cultural, and enrichment activities include, for example, after-school clubs, sports, sleepovers, school dances, field trips to museums, attending church, vacations, volunteering, after-school jobs, and cultural events like Native American dance groups.

Additional Resource

McInnis, A. (2015). *The reasonable and prudent parent standard: Information for resource parents*. Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Center for Resource Families.

Retrieved from <https://www.acrf.org/assets/docs/Core Resource Page/The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.pdf>