



TEXAS CENTER
FOR THE JUDICIARY

2018 Child Welfare Judicial Conference

How to Bring Normalcy to Youth in Care

Hon. Peter Sakai

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Federal Law

- The federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 required states to implement a “reasonable and prudent parenting standard” giving foster parents the authority to make day-to-day decisions affecting children in their care regarding extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, social, or sporting activities.
 - It required states to adopt a definition, and Texas adopted a definition that was effective September 1, 2015.
 - It requires caregivers to use the “reasonable and prudent parent standard” when determining whether to allow a child in foster care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. This is also referred to as Normalcy.

What is Normalcy?

The National Foster Care and Youth & Alumni Policy Council defines normalcy as the opportunity for children and youth in and out of home placements to participate in and experience age and culturally appropriate activities, responsibilities, and life skills that promote normal growth and development.



Child Care & Normalcy

- “Normalcy” is the ability of a child to live as normal a life as possible, including: participating in childhood activities suitable for children of the same age, level of maturity, and developmental level as determined by a reasonable and prudent parent standard; and having normal interaction and experiences within a foster family and participating in foster family activities (§749.2601).
- Childhood activities include unsupervised childhood activities.
- Service planning meetings must include discussion on how to achieve normalcy for a child, including any restrictions on participating in these activities (§749.2603). A child that is verbal and able to participate, must participate in Service Plan development.



Why Normalcy?

BECAUSE IT IS THE LAW



Texas Law

Texas Family Code Sections 263.306(a-1)(c).

- **At each permanency hearing before final order**
 - The court shall review the Department's efforts to ensure that the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age-appropriate normalcy activities including activities not listed in the child's Service Plan.
 - No statutory requirement under Section 263.5031 that the court review the Department's efforts to ensure normalcy at **permanency hearings after the final order.**



Judge Sakai's Definition of Normalcy

**TREAT FOSTER CHILDREN AS THEY WERE YOUR
CHILDREN OR YOUR KIN'S CHILDREN**



Dr. Bruce Perry, Child Trauma Academy

“The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.”



How to Bring Normalcy?

1. Quit talking about normalcy but start to do it.
2. Talk to the foster child personally about their problems, obstacles, fears or what causes them anxiety or worry (not passing or happy talk).
3. Confront foster children who are acting out inappropriately or having issues with grades, sexual acting out, or delinquent behavior.
4. Develop relationships with child and foster parents to enhance, promote, or create communication within the family and court.



5. Empower and engage the foster parents by giving them permission to raise the standard of care and expectations for the foster child through training and guidance.
6. Do not talk through the CPS caseworkers or child placement case managers about the court's expectations.

