

## Activities and Experiences for Children in Out-of-Home Placements Act

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To most children, being involved in extracurricular activities is a normal part of their day to day lives. However, until recently, children and caregivers within foster homes haven't had that same luxury.

The recently passed federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act requires states to adopt a "reasonable and prudent parent" standard for a foster parent to make decisions to maintain the health, safety, and foster the best interests of the child, as well as decisions about the child's participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. On December 10, 2015, Governor Wolf signed Act 75 into law.

"It is our duty to see that children in foster care are afforded the same opportunities as all other children. We cannot forget these kids who are relying on us to do what is best for them. This brings us one step closer to ensuring that each child in Pennsylvania is given an opportunity to succeed."

- SECRETARY TED DALLAS

The Activities and Experiences for Children in Out-of-Home Placements Act is designed to promote the well-being and opportunity to participate in developmental or age appropriate activities for children and youth in foster care and to meet the reasonable and prudent parent standard mandated by federal law.

DHS's Office of Children, Youth, and Families issued a training template to assist county and private children and youth agencies in training resource families and designated staff on what the "reasonable and prudent standard" standard means. This training serves to educate caregivers about their improved ability, under Act 75, to support children and youth in their care. Caregivers are now empowered to make day-to-day decisions that impact their foster child's participation in activities without requiring the approval of counties, private agencies, or courts. Children will now be able to join sports teams, attend sleepovers, go on school field trips, and participate in after-school activities, for which foster parents or other caregivers were often previously required to obtain permission before the child could participate

### Impact for Youth in Foster Care



Barb H., a former foster youth and current Youth Quality Improvement Specialist at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, says that this act will allow a generation of youth to experience a new sense of normalcy and will empower youth to ask their caregivers to participate in activities that enable them to have fun and experience independence. "As a youth in foster care, I experienced restrictions from participating in activities like sleepovers with friends or just hanging out after school. Those activities would have provided laughter, which was an essential part of my healing."



Garry, a resource parent for the past 15 years, feels this act will aid in the recruitment and retention of foster parents because it allows caregivers to treat kids with the dignity that they deserve. "For so long foster parents have been unable to make decisions for the children in their care. This law gives us the opportunity to treat children as if they were our own, and provides normalcy for both the resource parents and the children."