

# Caregiver Supports Project FAQ

## Caregiver Supports are Replacing Foster Care Rates.

**Caregiver Supports are a combination of the reimbursement paid to licensed caregivers and placement supports provided by the Tribe or a contracted provider.**

The Caregiver Supports Project will include a big change to the way rate assessment is currently done. The caregiver support levels are designed to align with the diverse needs of children and youth in care. This means that DCYF will focus on identifying those needs rather than asking caregivers to report time spent caring for a child. It is an objective way to ensure supports are available for caregivers caring for children with a variety of needs.

Starting January 1, 2024, the current rate assessment process will stop and DCYF will no longer contact the caregivers to complete an assessment. Instead, DCYF has developed a tool that will be used to determine the caregiver support level for each child. The caregiver support level is based on the needs and characteristics of the child. Level determinations will be made using information from the child's case file, information gathered from the child, parents, family, and other important individuals in the child's life, and health history information.

**There are two phases to this project.**

### Phase 1

- Replace the existing four-level foster care rate assessment system with a seven-level caregiver support payment model that is based on the diverse needs of children and youth in care.
- Changes in the way rate assessments are done.
  - o Starting January 1, 2024, the current rate assessment process will stop and DCYF will no longer contact the caregivers within 30 days of placement to complete an assessment. Instead, DCYF has developed a tool that will be used to determine the caregiver support level for each child.
  - o The new assessment process is made up of two parts: Placement Resource Specialists (replacing Foster Care Rate Assessors) will gather information about a child's support needs and then they will validate with health history information provided by the DSHS Research and Data Analysis (RDA) team who has access to health history data through payment data.

### Phase 2

- Implementation of a new Caregiver Supports Contract to provide placement supports to both licensed and unlicensed caregivers to assist them in identifying and accessing resources for the children and youth in their home.
- The Caregiver Supports Contracts will be awarded to providers through a bidding process based on catchment areas and the placement supports will be phased in starting in Spring 2024 through Summer 2026.
- The Caregiver Support Services Contract will provide two areas of services to caregivers: Placement Support and Case Aides.
  - o Placement Support is a service offered to every caregiver, support levels 1-7. This service is built to assist caregivers to identify and access resources that support them in caring for children and youth in their home. The level of support will go up as the needs of the child or youth go up. Support areas include accessing resources such as education advocacy, health and well-being coordination, finding local childcare, culturally and developmentally appropriate care, transition to adulthood, and crisis supports. As stated before, the Caregiver Supports Contract is related to Placement Supports for the caregiver, and not direct provision of services to the child. The purpose of the contract is for providers to help ensure caregivers have access to the supports that they need to care for kids.
  - o Case Aides will automatically be authorized for caregiver supports levels 3 through 7.
- The level of Placement Supports will go up as the needs of the child or youth go up.

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**Q: What is the new level system and what rates will be paid to caregivers?**

**A:** See diagram below. Rates below are the full rate, including the basic level. New rates go into effect January 1, 2024. Level 2 is for youth aged 12 and up so there are no rates for ages 0-11. The rate for Level 1 youth aged 12 and up is for Initial License homes who receive Basic Foster Care payments and do not receive level payments.

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7
New Support Levels	Basic Maintenance Foster Care	Support Needs: Adolescent Low Needs	Support Needs: Chronic Physical Health	Support Needs: Developmental Disability	Support Needs: Developmental Disability & Chronic Physical Health	Support Needs: Moderate Mental Health	Support Needs: Complex Mental Health
<b>Rates for Caregiver Support Levels Based on Age – Levels 2-7 rates include Basic</b>							
Age: 0-5	\$722	N/A	\$1,407	\$1,749.50	\$2,092	\$2,434.50	\$2,777
Age: 6-11	\$846	N/A	\$1,531	\$1,873.50	\$2,216	\$2,558.50	\$2,901
Age: 12+	\$860	\$1,202.50	\$1,545	\$1,887.50	\$2,230	\$2,572.50	\$2,915

**Q: Will DCYF still interview caregivers as part of the new rate assessment system?**

**A:** No, caregivers will not be interviewed as part of the new rate assessment system for the initial determination. New level determinations will be made using information from the child’s case file, information gathered from the child, parents, family, and other important individuals in the child’s life, and health history information. A DCYF Placement Resource Specialist may also speak with the social worker for more information. Caregivers may be consulted if additional information about the child or youth’s needs is required. Caregivers may request a new assessment at any time if there is a new diagnosis or newly identified need for a child in their care.

**Q: Which children will this level determination be done on?**

**A:** Caregiver support level determinations will be completed for ALL children in out-of-home care as of January 2024. This information will be used during phase 1 to determine what licensed caregivers are paid. During phase 2 it will also be used to determine what type of Placement Support services the home the child is living in will receive (whether licensed or unlicensed).

**Q: What if a child in my home already has a level, 1-4, in the current system?**

**A:** Children and youth that are already in care and have an assigned level 1-4 in the current system will be assigned a new caregiver support level, 1-7 and rates will update accordingly in January 2024.

**Q: Once the initial level determination is made, will it ever be updated?**

**A:** Yes, it will be reviewed every 6 months. A review could also be conducted in the interim if there is information that the child or youth’s needs have significantly changed in a way that would move a youth to a different level.

**Q: Are there other impacts to licensed caregivers in this new system during phase 1?**

**A:** All foster parents will be paid directly by DCYF when the new rates are effective. This is a change for CPA caregivers. Starting January 2024, CPA caregivers will start receiving invoices as state licensed homes currently do and they will need to verify those invoices for payment. CPA Caregivers will receive payment for December services at the current rates in January via their CPA. After submitting an invoice for January services in January 2024, CPA caregivers will receive their first payment directly from DCYF for those services provided January 2024 in February 2024. DCYF recommends caregivers sign up for Direct Deposit and register for the SSPS Provider Portal to make payments and verifying invoices easier and more streamlined. You can review this training document for information

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about signing up for Direct Deposit, registering for the Portal, or submitting invoices:

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/ProviderPaymentsTraining.pdf>

DCYF is also offering several Zoom sessions where a DCYF staff member will be available to answer any questions caregivers have about invoices and payments. Anyone experiencing technical issues signing up for Direct Deposit, registering for the Portal or submitting invoices can get support in one of these Zoom sessions. Please see a schedule of upcoming sessions on the [project website](#) under the Payments header.

If you experience technical issues with the online forms, you can also email [dshsspsweb@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:dshsspsweb@dshs.wa.gov) or call 360-664-6161.

**Q: What if the foster parent wants a higher rate than the child's specified level? Will it still be possible to issue Special Supervision payments (aka Exceptional Cost Plans or ECP's)?**

A: The intent under this new payment system is that the level amount will be the sole payment for monthly care. DCYF acknowledges that additional payments may be needed in a very small number of situations that will be subject to far more scrutiny through a standardized process. Discussions are still occurring about how to address current and new special supervision requests. That plan will be shared publicly once it's completed.

**Q: Can other types of payments still be made for children in licensed care such as clothing vouchers, concrete goods, mileage reimbursement for caregivers, etc.?**

A: Yes. Those payments are not impacted.

**Q: How does this new system affect case aide hours?**

A: In phase 2 of the Caregiver Supports Project, the new contracted agencies will be expected to be able to provide case aide hours for all children at levels 3-7 regardless of placement type.

**Q: How does this affect Tier 1 & 2 Receiving Care, Emergent Placement Services beds, BRS treatment beds, or other types of placements?**

A: It doesn't. Payments and service rules for all other types of placements will remain the same.

**Q: What are the respite rates for each level?**

A: Respite rates will remain the same but will be realigned to the seven levels instead of four.

Levels 1-3 = Tier 1 (\$22.44)

Levels 4-7 = Tier 2 (\$38.76)

**Q: Is it possible that support levels will be reduced as youth stabilize in a placement?**

A: Yes. A youth needs to show a period of stabilization for at least two review periods (12 months) before a decrease in level is considered.

**Q: How do I get more detailed information about this project?**

A: Please visit the project website: <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/foster-parenting/caregiver-supports-project>

Questions or comments can be sent to [dcyf.caregiversupports@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:dcyf.caregiversupports@dcyf.wa.gov) and answers will be included in future video updates and FAQ documents posted on the project website. A detailed explanation of the RDA research used to inform this project can be [accessed here](#).

