

# New Policy Information for Caregivers

**New policies have been put into place that affect foster parents and relatives with state-dependent children.**

## Schooling policy

State policy requires all children in out-of-home care to attend public school unless they are court-approved for home schooling, private school or participation in an Alternative Learning Experience (ALE), a form of public education that provides instruction in an online, remote or site-based setting. The curriculum being used by the instructor must be developed, approved and monitored by the school district. Instruction is conducted 100 percent online in the child's placement setting under all three alternatives.

Children placed under a Voluntary Placement Agreement only require CA approval, not court approval, for the three alternatives to public education.

The revised policy requires annual approval to be obtained by the caregiver for each child placed by CA in their home. Contact the child's assigned caseworker when requesting that a child placed in your home be approved to participate in any of the above-mentioned settings to start the approval process.

If the request is for the 2017-2018 school year, caregivers should contact their caseworker immediately to allow enough time for the approval process.

## Smoke detector policy

Smoke detectors are now required to be installed both inside and outside of all bedrooms in foster homes to comply with state-adopted building codes. Most structures, especially newer ones, already have them inside and outside bedrooms, said Krissy Wright, program manager for Children Administration's Division of Licensed Resources.

## New weighted blanket policy

Weighted blankets may only be used "upon the advice and training from a licensed health care professional for children over the age of three years who do not have mobility limitations" according to the new policy in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). Weighted blankets are never to be used for children under age three.

The blankets have not been shown to have any positive effects and can create problems such as lack of mobility, Wright said.

## Microwave Oven Policy

Microwave ovens may not be used to warm breast milk or formula. A microwave can distribute the heat unevenly, so a parent may test the milk and it feels warm but another part of the bottle may be very hot and could burn a baby's mouth, Wright said.