



ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
150 WILLIAM STREET- 18th FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038

JOHN B. MATTINGLY
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: All Foster Care Agency Executive Directors
All Foster Care Directors
All ACS Staff

From: Commissioner *John Mattingly*

Re: Treating Foster Children as Members of the Family: Vacations and Sleepovers for Children in Foster Care

Date: June 29, 2007

Because of New York City's commitment to normalizing the experience of children in care, I am writing to clarify and expand our foster care agencies' ability to allow overnight visits and vacations with foster families. A formal policy statement will follow.

Foster children should be encouraged to participate in the same educational, cultural, and recreational activities as other children. To that end, foster children should be permitted to have sleepovers at friends' homes, as long as the child's foster parents have checked out the family to the extent any family would before permitting a sleepover. Case planners should be informed of the foster family's decision regarding a sleepover in the normal course of business.

Foster children should also be permitted to travel with their foster families on vacations, including out-of-state vacations, or on school outings—just as they would were they not in foster care. For lengthy in-state vacations away from NYC, and for all out-of-state vacations, the foster care agency is empowered to make the decision that the trip is in the child's best interest. Of course, the birth parents' approval and support must be sought as well. In those situations where the parents will not approve, but the agency believes the child should go, the approval by an appropriate representative of the foster agency's management should be sought and documented. Every effort should be made to make up any birth family visits that are missed. ACS approval is no longer necessary.

Further, foster families should be actively encouraged (and financially supported if necessary) to take foster children on vacation with them.

For more details on the factors to be considered and planned for regarding vacations (e.g., court hearings, treatment sessions, and especially parental visits), please refer to Commissioner Scoppetta's memo "Delegation of Selected Case Management Functions" of April 26, 1999. A full new policy will follow.