

Policy Subject:	Differential Board Rates for Public Foster Care
Effective Date:	July 1, 2019
Approved By:	<p>Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW <i>RJG</i> Executive Director Social Services Administration</p> <p>Stafford Chipungu, Chief Financial Officer <i>SC</i> Budget Management and Finance</p>
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Originating Office:	<p>April Edwards, Manager Placement and Permanency Social Services Administration Department of Human Services</p> <p>Jeannette Jumbelick, Analyst Resource Homes/Placement and Permanency Social Services Administration Department of Human Services</p>
Supersedes:	SSA-CW #19-12
Program Affected:	Out of Home Placement Services and Resource Units

Legal Information and Purpose

The board rate is set by DHS and applies to all resource providers. In addition to the 1% increase to foster care board rates provided in FY2019, the Governor's budget includes a 3% provider rate increase for FY2020. The rate increase will be effective July 1, 2019.

Because the District of Columbia pays higher board rates for foster children than Maryland does, it is essential that Maryland remains competitive with their resource home recruitment and retention efforts in the counties surrounding Washington, District of Columbia. Recently, Maryland had been losing families to the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia foster care placements exceed the number of children in the local jurisdiction's custody. This creates a major barrier to the recruitment of sufficient numbers of public resource homes to accommodate Maryland's foster children needing placements.

Policy

This Policy Directive provides guidelines for the payment of a differential board rate to public resource families in Maryland. Each year, Maryland launches vigorous resource parent recruitment efforts, with the goal of recruiting a sufficient number of resource families to address foster children needing placements. The District of Columbia (DC) has a large number of approved resource homes located in various counties in Maryland. The District of Columbia pays their public families a higher board rate than Maryland does; therefore a differential board rate supports the recruitment and retention of Maryland's public resource families. Differential board rates are defined as specific foster care board rates which exceed the standard Maryland Board Rates, for the purpose of maintaining adequate numbers of public resource families and to provide foster care services for foster children in specific Maryland jurisdictions.

Procedural Guidance

The following criteria necessitate providing public resource families in a specific local jurisdiction with a differential board rate:

1. The number of children placed in a given county or Baltimore City from another state or the District of Columbia represents at least one-third (33%) of the total number of children in the custody of the given county or Baltimore City.
2. The majority of the "out-of-state children" are from a state or DC that pays higher board rates than Maryland's standard board rates.

Prince George's and Charles Counties have been determined to be qualifying jurisdictions.

The regular differential board rate to be paid to resource families in Prince George's and Charles Counties is \$927/month for children 0-11 years old and \$942/month for children 12 years and older.

The qualifying local departments do not receive the differential board rate if they have an approved TFC program.

DIFFERENTIAL BOARD RATES FY2020

	Differential Per Diem	Monthly Clothing	Differential Monthly Board Rate
<u>Regular Care Differential Rate</u> (Payment category 2173, 7173)			
• Infant through age 11	\$30.47	\$60	\$927
• Age 12 and older	\$30.98	\$75	\$942

Please note: The monthly clothing allowance is built into the monthly board rate, as is indicated in the **Foster Family Care FY2020 Monthly Board Rate** chart in Policy SSA-CW19-16. The **Foster Family Care FY2020 Monthly Board Rate** chart reflects the minimum amount that resource parents shall spend monthly, when providing clothing for foster children/youth.

THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES SHALL TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

1. The local departments of social services (LDSS) shall keep accurate and up-to-date data regarding trends that would necessitate a differential board rate for a given jurisdiction and report the need for a differential board rate to the Social Services Administration (SSA), if it is determined that the criteria applies.
2. The LDSS shall conduct yearly reassessments of the need for modification to the jurisdiction's Differential Board Rates.
3. The LDSS shall make payments to public resource parents at the amount identified by SSA.
4. If children from other jurisdictions are placed with a public foster family in a county where differential board rates are in effect, the placing county will be responsible for paying the differential board rates that apply.

THE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION SHALL TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

1. Conduct annual statewide assessments to determine a local jurisdiction's eligibility to receive a differential board rate;
2. Provide assistance to local jurisdictions with tracking and monitoring the recruitment and retention of resource parents;
3. Provide support, assistance and advocacy; and
4. Identify the exact amount to be paid to each eligible jurisdiction based on a review of the current board rate and individual jurisdictional need and communicate the findings.

Alignment with the Practice Model and Desired Outcomes

Maryland's goal is to ensure all children are placed in a safe and nurturing environment. This policy provides guidelines for the differential foster care board rate to support the placement of a child while in care. This policy aligns with the Integrated Practice Model by supporting our partnership with resource parents to ensure our commitment that the children's needs are met.

Documentation

The foster care rate is documented in MD Chessie. The new rates containing the 3% increase have been updated in MD CHESSIE and will be effective July 1, 2019.

Related Policies and Information

- SSA-CW#19-16 Guidelines of Foster Care Board Rate and Expenditure