

CareCertify LLC

Foster Care Training Series

FC-09

Health, Medication & Daily Care

Participant Guide

Foster Care Training Series · Audience: Foster Parents · Agency Staff · Treatment Foster Care Providers · CE Hours: 1.0

A Child's Caregiver and Health Advocate

Children in foster care often arrive with health needs that have gone unmet — missed checkups, untreated conditions, dental and vision needs, and mental-health needs from trauma. As their daily caregiver, you're also their health advocate: getting them the care they need, managing it safely, and partnering with the medical and case team.

This guide covers daily care, health care access and consent, medication safety, mental health, and responding to health changes. Foster parents make sure children get the care they're entitled to.

Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Meet children's daily physical and emotional needs
- Access and coordinate health care within consent rules
- Manage medications safely
- Support mental and behavioral health
- Recognize and respond to health changes and emergencies

Section 1: Meeting Daily Physical and Emotional Needs

Daily care is the foundation: nutritious food, appropriate clothing, good hygiene, adequate rest, and warm, predictable routines. Meet emotional needs too — through consistency, affection, and attentive care — and support school, play, friendships, and development. For children who've experienced chaos and neglect, the ordinary reliability of good daily care is itself healing.

Section 2: Accessing and Coordinating Health Care

Children in foster care are entitled to comprehensive health care — medical, dental, vision, and mental health. They often need catch-up care. As the daily caregiver, get children to checkups and appointments, follow through on referrals, coordinate with the caseworker and providers, and keep health records and immunizations up to date. Advocate for the care a child needs; you may be the first adult to prioritize their health.

Section 3: Consent and Authorization for Treatment

Consent for medical treatment of a foster child follows specific rules and isn't always the foster parent's to give — it may rest with the birth parent, the agency, the caseworker, or the court, depending on the situation and

type of care. Know what you can authorize (often routine care) and what requires others (like surgery, psychotropic medication, or non-routine treatment). For routine care, follow the plan; for bigger decisions, check with your caseworker. In a true emergency, get the child the care they need and notify the team.

Section 4: Safe Medication Management

Manage medications safely: store all medications locked and out of reach, give them exactly as prescribed (right child, medication, dose, route, time), and track and document each dose. Never give medication that isn't authorized, change a dose on your own, or force medication — document and report a refusal. Watch for and report side effects, and call 911 for severe reactions. Psychotropic medications for children involve special oversight and consent rules — work closely with the prescriber and caseworker.

Document every dose

Accurate medication records protect the child and you. Give as prescribed, track each dose, and report refusals and side effects.

Section 5: Supporting Mental and Behavioral Health

Most children in foster care have mental and behavioral health needs rooted in trauma. Support their therapy and follow the treatment plan, provide a calm and supportive trauma-informed home, and partner with mental-health providers. Watch for and report changes in mood, behavior, and functioning — and take any safety concern (such as thoughts of self-harm) seriously, getting help immediately (988, caseworker, 911 for danger). Mental health is as important as physical health.

Section 6: Nutrition, Development, and Routines

Provide balanced, nutritious food and respect cultural, religious, and medical dietary needs. Support healthy development with age-appropriate activities, play, learning, and consistent routines. Watch a child's growth, milestones, and developmental needs, and raise concerns with providers and the team — many children in care need developmental catch-up. Good nutrition and development support a child's whole-person wellbeing.

Section 7: Recognizing and Responding to Health Changes

As the daily caregiver, you're often the first to notice a health change — illness, injury, pain, or changes in eating, sleeping, or behavior. Know each child's conditions, allergies, and medications. Respond to changes by getting appropriate care and reporting to the team, and treat emergencies (severe symptoms, serious injury) as emergencies — call 911. Attentive observation catches problems early and gets children the care they need.

Section 8: Partnering With the Health and Case Team

Supporting a child's health is a team effort. Work with medical and mental-health providers, the caseworker, the agency, and (as appropriate) the birth family, sharing information within confidentiality rules and the case plan. Keep good health records, follow the plan, and advocate for the child's needs. When you partner well with the team, children get the comprehensive care that supports their healing and wellbeing.

Key Terms

Term	What it means
Daily care	Meeting a child's everyday physical and emotional needs.
Consent/authorization	Who may approve a foster child's medical treatment.
Medication management	Storing, giving, and tracking medications safely.
Psychotropic medication	Mental-health medication with special oversight for children in care.
Trauma-informed home	A calm, supportive environment that supports mental health.
Health advocate	A foster parent's role in getting a child needed care.

Check Your Understanding

1. What daily needs do you meet for a child in care?
2. Who can consent to a foster child's medical treatment?
3. What are the rules for safe medication management?
4. Why is mental health especially central in foster care?
5. How should you respond to a health change or emergency?

What's Next

Looking ahead

Next, FC-10: Documentation & Working With the Team covers records and collaboration that support the child.