

Reimbursement That Reflects The Real Cost of Foster Care

Answers for the Oklahoma foster care reimbursement study



Focus: the foster-parent reimbursement first.
Then the private-agency cost of supporting those homes.

1. What does a foster parent receive today?

Current Oklahoma Human Services resource-parent reimbursement

\$17.72

Ages 0–5

\$531.60 / 30 days

\$20.42

Ages 6–12

\$612.60 / 30 days

\$22.62

Ages 13+

\$678.60 / 30 days

What the payment is for

Food • clothing • shelter • school supplies • personal incidentals • reasonable travel

2. Is this a salary?

No. Oklahoma describes it as reimbursement for the child's care.

REIMBURSEMENT

Not a salary

OKDHS says foster parents are not paid a salary.

Covered purpose

Daily care costs: food, clothing, shelter, school supplies, incidentals and reasonable travel.

Medical costs

When applicable, the child's medical care is covered through Medicaid rather than the maintenance payment.

Bottom line

The reimbursement is designed to offset the cost of caring for the child — not to compensate the foster parent for their time.

3. What costs still land on the foster family?

The state identifies the covered categories; families also encounter costs that are not fully captured by a flat daily payment.

Everyday care

Food, clothing, household use

School

Supplies, fees, school needs

Transportation

Visitation, appointments, school, activities

Activities

Sports, clubs and ordinary childhood activities

Child-specific needs

Expenses outside Medicaid-covered medical care or separately authorized payments

Time & logistics

Scheduling, appointments, case meetings and transportation time

5. What would a cost-based foster-parent rate look like?

Start with \$25/day for ages 0–5, then increase the rate by the same percentage for older children.

AGES 0–5

\$25.00

Base rate

per day

AGES 6–12

\$28.81

+15.2% vs. 0–5

per day

AGES 13–18

\$31.91

+27.7% vs. 0–5

per day

How the age progression was calculated

The current Oklahoma rates increase 15.2% from ages 0–5 to 6–12 and 27.6% from ages 0–5 to 13+. Applying those same percentage differences to a \$25 starting rate produces \$28.81/day for ages 6–12 and \$31.91/day for ages 13–18.

Current OKDHS rates used for the age percentages: \$17.72 • \$20.42 • \$22.62/day.

This is a proposed cost-based illustration, not an existing Oklahoma rate.

6. What happened after the 2012 rate increase?

Oklahoma created a five-year rate path in 2012. The current rates are now below the final rates in that plan.

2012

Pinnacle Plan starting rates

\$12.17 • \$14.33 • \$16.61/day

OKDHS said the existing rate was significantly below rising cost-of-living expenses.

The state said it needed 500 additional foster families.

2017

Pinnacle Plan final rates

\$18.58 • \$21.30 • \$23.34/day

These are the SFY 2017 monthly rates in the Pinnacle Plan converted to a 30-day daily amount.

Today

Current OKDHS rates

\$17.72 • \$20.42 • \$22.62/day

Compared with the 2017 plan:
-\$0.86 • -\$0.88 • -\$0.72/day

What this means

The issue is not simply whether rates increased. Oklahoma set a five-year increase path in 2012; today's published rates are below the plan's 2017 endpoints.

Sources: Oklahoma Pinnacle Plan (2012) and current Oklahoma Human Services reimbursement rates. 2017 daily figures = published monthly rates ÷ 30.

7. What rate should a foster family receive?

A cost-based starting point: \$25/day for ages 0–5, with the same age-based percentage increases used in today's rate structure.

AGES 0–5

\$25.00 / DAY

Base rate

AGES 6–12

\$28.81 / DAY

+15.2% from 0–5

AGES 13–18

\$31.91 / DAY

+27.6% from 0–5

How the numbers are calculated

$\$25.00 \times (20.42 \div 17.72) = \$28.81/\text{day}$ | $\$25.00 \times (22.62 \div 17.72) = \$31.91/\text{day}$

Why this matters

This creates an age-adjusted reimbursement that starts from a defined cost-of-care benchmark instead of today's lower base rate.

Current Oklahoma rates used only to preserve the existing age progression: \$17.72 • \$20.42 • \$22.62/day. Proposed rates are illustrative.

7. What does the evidence say about recruitment and retention?

The evidence supports treating financial support as one part of foster-family stability — without claiming it is the only cause.

Documented Oklahoma position

- 2012: OKDHS said rate increases would help retention.
- Pinnacle Plan: reimbursement was part of a broader recruitment/retention strategy.
- 2023 Task Force: recommended increased financial support for foster families.

What is not established here

There is not a single current statewide study in these sources that quantifies:

- the exact cost of raising a foster child in Oklahoma today
- the exact retention effect of a \$1/day increase
- the exact statewide savings from higher reimbursement

9. What does Angels provide around each placement?

The agency provides the infrastructure that supports the foster family and helps stabilize the child's placement.

Daily case management

Ongoing case management and coordination for the child, foster family and case team.

24-hour support

Access to agency support around the clock when a foster family needs help.

Essential supplies

Beds, cribs, car seats, formula, clothing and other essential items for children through Bright Sky Ministry.

Recruit & retain

Recruiting, screening and retaining qualified foster families.

Train & prepare

Training and preparing caregivers for trauma, behavior and the child's individual needs.

Placement support

Matching, placement support, crisis intervention and work to prevent disruption.

Why this matters

The foster parent provides the home. The private agency provides the daily professional support around that home — helping the placement remain stable and moving the child toward permanency.

Angels-specific services described from agency program operations; Bright Sky Ministry provides essential items for children.

Why private-agency support is critical

A foster home can only remain stable when the family has support around it.

Recruit & retain

A steady pool of prepared foster families keeps children from waiting for homes.

Prepare & match

Training and careful matching help families understand a child's needs before placement.

Support the family

Ongoing coaching and rapid response help families manage challenges before they become crises.

Coordinate the team

Agencies connect foster parents with caseworkers, schools, therapists, parents and community providers.

Protect stability

When a placement begins to struggle, early intervention can help prevent an unnecessary move.

Work toward permanency

Stable placements give children the consistency needed while reunification, guardianship or adoption work continues.

9. What does the private agency actually provide?

The agency is not simply a placement middleman.

Recruit & retain

Build and sustain the foster-family pool

Train & prepare

Prepare families for trauma and complex needs

Match & place

Match children to families and manage placement

Support & respond

Provide ongoing support and crisis response

Coordinate

Work with schools, therapists, parents and providers

Prevent disruption

Intervene early to preserve placements

10. What outcomes does Angels report?

These are Angels-specific outcomes, not statewide estimates.

~97%

One-home placement

Children remain in one foster home for their entire foster care journey.

<0.5%

Re-entry after reunification

Children returning to foster care after reunification, adoption, or emancipation.

>90%

Retention

Angels reports staff and foster-family retention above 90%.

The answers are clear.

FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

Current reimbursement is a fixed daily amount. A cost-based approach would start at \$25/day for ages 0–5, then increase to \$28.81 for ages 6–12 and \$31.91 for ages 13–18.

FOR PRIVATE AGENCIES

Angels receives \$26/day for traditional contracted foster care, while Angels reports that the actual cost of recruiting, supporting and managing a foster placement is \$45+/day. That creates a \$19+/day gap that must be covered by other resources.

Sources

1. Oklahoma Human Services — Reimbursement Rates for Foster Care (current rates and covered purposes).
2. Oklahoma Human Services — Foster Care FAQ (reimbursement is not salary).
3. Oklahoma Human Services — foster-care maintenance payment policy (medical care/maintenance and annual review).
4. Oklahoma Pinnacle Plan — SFY 2012–2017 resource-parent reimbursement schedule and cost-of-living framework.
5. Oklahoma Child Welfare Task Force — 2023 recommendations, including increased financial support for foster families.
6. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — CPI-U annual averages, 2012–2025.
7. Angels Foster Family Network — agency-specific cost and outcome figures supplied for testimony.