

## **TUSCARAWAS COUNTY JOB & FAMILY SERVICES**

### **INTERNET AND CELL PHONE USAGE BY CHILDREN IN THE CUSTODY OF TUSCARAWAS COUNTY JOB & FAMILY SERVICES**

#### **POLICY**

Tuscarawas County Job & Family Services will make the use of the Internet and the ability of foster children to have cell phones available as a privilege for children in agency custody and will take the necessary precautions to ensure that the children are not subjected to undue danger while engaging in the use of the same.

#### **PROCEDURE**

1. A foster child may earn the privilege of having a family cell phone. Use of the same will be restricted to appropriate times, such as after school, at the discretion of the foster parents. Foster parents retain the right to review the call and text history, if applicable, of the child at any time. Children should turn the cell phones into foster parents when not in use. The foster parents and the agency retain the ability to restrict or eliminate cell phone usage by foster children when warranted by their behavior and other circumstances.
2. The cost of cell phones will be borne by the foster parents or the foster child dependent upon the child's employment and independent living status.
3. Foster children may likewise earn the privilege of Internet use for school and recreational purposes. Access to and use of the Internet or any particular Internet site may be restricted or eliminated by the foster parents or agency when the behavior or other circumstances of the child warrant the same.
4. Foster parents are encouraged to have the child use the Internet in a public area within the home. Foster parents should frequently check the history of sites visited by foster children to ensure the sites are appropriate.
5. Foster children are prohibited from accessing chat rooms. Any passwords obtained to log onto a computer or any site must be given to the foster parents to allow them access to the child's Internet activities.
6. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, may only be used with the consent of the foster parents. If a child is permitted to use these sites, he/she must allow the foster parent access to log onto the site and an opportunity to review the child's activities and listing of friends.
7. Foster children must be respectful and only communicate on the Internet in a manner that is consistent with expectations of their behavior in the foster home. No threatening or bullying activities, foul language, sexual comments, or references or other activities that may have the potential to cause embarrassment to the foster child or any other person or that could constitute criminal activities will be tolerated and will lead to the immediate suspension of all Internet privileges in addition to other punishment.

8. The following is a listing of some resources for foster parents to assist in ensuring that children's activities on the Internet are safe:
- a. "Me, MySpace and I, Parenting the Net Generation" by Larry Rosen, Ph.D.
  - b. bitdefender.com
  - c. netsmartz.org
  - d. kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/net\_safety.html
  - e. spectorspft.com
9. Any foster parent who is concerned about the Internet or cell phone activities of their foster child is encouraged to contact the child's case manager for assistance in answering any questions or discussing any particular issues.

  
Michelle Tope, Director

May 27, 2011  
Effective Date