

## FAMILY RESOURCE POLICY

### Introduction

The Department's overarching permanency planning goal is to provide for children to have safe, caring, stable, lifetime families in which to mature. While maintaining safety as the paramount concern, the Department first uses a strength-based, community-focused, collaborative approach aimed at strengthening the child's family. If it is not possible to maintain a child in her/his own home and the child lives with only one parent, the Department first explores the availability and willingness of the child's non-custodial parent to provide care for the child. If placement with someone other than a parent becomes necessary to maintain safety, the Department places highest priority on identifying a family resource from within the child's kinship or community circle, or placing the child with an unrestricted family if a kinship or child-specific family is not available. After placement the Department seeks to partner with the family resource in meeting the child's needs and working to build on the strengths of her/his family. In all placement decision-making, the Department holds the child's needs for safety and permanency paramount, while also considering the child's individual needs related to her/his physical, mental, and emotional well-being and the capacity of a specific potential placement to meet those needs.

**The Department only places children who are in the Department's care through a Voluntary Placement Agreement or in the Department's custody through a court order, except when the Department is arranging care for a child temporarily under MGL c. 119, § 23(E) or 51B.**

Parents, non-custodial as well as custodial, are **not** eligible to be foster/pre-adoptive parents for their own children. All placement decisions are made in a manner conducive to permanency planning and the timely return of the child to her/his own home or into a new permanent setting.

### **Types of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Resources**

To respond to situations in which it is not possible to maintain a child in her/his own home, nor with a non-custodial parent, the Department uses a multi-step process to assure the availability of quality, community-based resources for children who can benefit from placement in a family setting. The Department develops and works with 3 types of families to provide either foster care or adoption as its partners in meeting the permanency needs of children:

- **KINSHIP FAMILY:** Kinship care is the full time nurturing and protection of children in a licensed family setting by relatives or those adults to whom a child and the child's parents and family members ascribe a "family" relationship. Kinship families are persons related either by blood, marriage or adoption (i.e., adult sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, first cousin) or a significant other adult to whom the child and parent(s) ascribe the role of family based on cultural and affectional ties or individual family values. It is believed that placement with a kinship family reinforces the child's racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious heritage and strengthens and promotes continuity of familial relationships.
- **CHILD-SPECIFIC FAMILY:** A non-kinship individual(s) is identified and licensed as a placement for a particular child (e.g., school teacher comes forward; child recommends friend's parent).
- **UNRESTRICTED FAMILY:** An individual(s) who has been licensed by the Department as a partnership resource to provide foster/pre-adoptive care for a child usually not previously known to the individual(s).

All families with whom the Department places children must be licensed, including those that are utilized on a temporary, short-term basis such as respite homes and visiting resources. **Respite homes** are licensed foster/pre-adoptive families who accept short-term, temporary placements of children in order to provide a break to the foster/pre-adoptive family with whom the child normally resides. **Visiting resources** are licensed foster/pre-adoptive families with whom children are placed on a short-term basis such as during the vacation period of a community residential program.

When foster/pre-adoptive care is determined to be the most appropriate placement setting, the Department considers potential foster/pre-adoptive families in the following order of priority:

- kinship families;
- child-specific families;
- unrestricted families with parenting experience;
- unrestricted families without parenting experience.

### **Assuring Quality**

The multi-step process that the Department uses to assure the quality of its foster/pre-adoptive family resources includes:

- **Recruitment/Identification:** The use of wide-ranging, family-centered and community-focused approaches for identifying families willing to participate in training and assessment in preparation for licensing as placements for children in the Department's care or custody. Approaches include: (1) efforts to identify prospective kinship and child-specific families from the children's own kinship, social and community networks; and (2) programs to recruit unrestricted families that involve statewide, regional and local multi-media advertising, toll-free telephone access, person-to-person contacts, recognition events, child-specific recruitment events, etc.
- **Initial Eligibility Screening:** The process of obtaining sufficient information regarding a prospective foster/pre-adoptive family/individual to determine whether the family/individual meets the Department's minimum standards for: (1) eligibility to apply, and (2) the home. The process includes at least one visit to the home.
- **Pre-Licensing Education, Support and Training Program:** The preparation of each prospective foster/pre-adoptive family through participation in the program specified for the type of licensing they are seeking, taking into consideration their previous experience and/or preparation and their individual training needs, particularly related to the needs of the children who are to be placed in their care.
- **Licensing Study:** The participation of each applicant in the completion of a comprehensive family assessment, the purpose of which is to determine that the family meets Department standards for licensing as a Department foster/pre-adoptive family.
- **Placement Support:** Various efforts undertaken by the Department to encourage and enable foster/pre-adoptive families to meet the needs of the children placed with them, including: provision of regular contact from a Department Social Worker that is relatively intensive during the probationary period, and the establishment of limits on the number of children the family may care for.
- **Annual Reassessments and License Renewal Studies:** Each foster/pre-adoptive family is reassessed annually. The reassessment completed every second year is called the "License Renewal Study," is conducted by the assigned Family Resource Worker (FRW), and includes additional steps required for renewal of the license.

The Department may convene a clinical review team to review information and develop recommendations regarding any decision required by this policy.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions are applicable:

**HOUSEHOLD MEMBER:** Any individual, regardless of age, who resides, or spends substantial time at the home. This may include, but is not limited to, a non-custodial parent who visits the home; relatives, paramours and/or other individuals who spend overnights in the home; an individual who routinely babysits in the home and/or assumes some degree of caretaking responsibility, in the home, for **any** child in that home.

**PROBATIONARY PERIOD:** The 6 month period following initial child placement with the family, during which the following special provisions for supporting and encouraging the family are maintained: (1) no more than 2 children or one larger sibling group can be placed in the home at any given time unless a waiver is approved by the hosting Regional Director; and (2) the FRW contacts the family at least monthly, and after a foster/pre-adoptive child is placed in the home, the monthly contacts are normally

home visits. At the end of this initial 6 month period following the child's placement, the FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor, develops recommendations regarding future use of the resource.

**HOSTING REGIONAL/AREA OFFICE/DIRECTOR:** The Regional/Area Office/Director responsible for the foster/pre-adoptive family applicant or licensed foster/pre-adoptive family. This is normally determined by the geographic location of the home.

**PLACING REGIONAL/AREA OFFICE/DIRECTOR:** The Regional/Area Office/Director responsible for a case in which a child is in need of placement.

### **License Study Resources**

Appendix 1, "**Waivers of Pre-Licensing Training for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**", is provided to assist staff seeking waivers on behalf of prospective foster and pre-adoptive families who have had prior comparable training and/or experience or who have an acceptable reason for being unable to attend the pre-licensing education, support, and training program specified for the type of licensing they are seeking.

Appendix 2, "**Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family License Study Guide**", further details the information to be gathered during the License Study and provides illustrative questions. During this process, the following appendices to *Policy #85-011*, Assessment Policy, should also be consulted: Appendix C, "**Substance Abuse Protocol**", and Appendix D, "**Domestic Violence Protocol**".

Appendix 3, "**Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines**", expands upon the basic physical requirements for family resource homes by outlining additional safety issues/potential concerns which may be found inside or outside the home, including the neighborhood. The purpose of the Guidelines is to assist staff and prospective or current foster/pre-adoptive families in identifying and resolving any safety issues that may exist.

Appendix 4, "**Waivers for Placement of Children in Homes with Presumptively Disqualifying Dog Breeds or Other Potentially Dangerous Pets/Animals**", is provided to assist staff seeking waivers when placement is being considered of a child in Department care or custody under age 12 years in a home that maintains a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd dog, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of those 3 breeds. Appendix 4 also provides guidance for protecting child safety and well-being when homes have other pets or animals.

Appendix 5, "**Licensing of Department Employees as Department Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**", provides guidance regarding situations in which Department employees seek licensing from the Department to provide foster care or adoption to children who are in Department care or custody.

Appendix 6, "**Operational Map of Family Resource Activities**", outlines the Department's organization of responsibilities for completion of family resource-related tasks within Area, Regional and Central Offices.

### **Related Policies:**

<i>Policy #97-003:</i>	Service Planning and Referral Policy
<i>Policy #86-011:</i>	Ongoing Casework Policy, Procedures and Documentation
<i>Policy #88-001:</i>	Indian Child Welfare Act Policy
<i>Policy #86-014:</i>	Background Records Check Policy
<i>Policy #85-003:</i>	Health Care Services to Children in Placement
<i>Policy #89-003:</i>	Policy for Children Who Have AIDS, Are HIV+, or at Risk of HIV Infection
<i>Policy #84-004:</i>	Clothing Grant
<i>Policy #89-002:</i>	Supplemental Reimbursement Policy
<i>Policy #84-005:</i>	Guardianship Policy
<i>Policy #85-007:</i>	Adoption Subsidy Policy
<i>Policy #89-004:</i>	Obtaining MassHealth
<i>Policy #97-002:</i>	Education Policy
<i>Policy #94-001:</i>	Fair Hearing and Grievance Policy

**See Regulations 110 CMR 7.100 – 7.200, 110 CMR 10.10 and 110 CMR 18.000 et seq.**

## **RECRUITMENT / IDENTIFICATION OF FOSTER / PRE-ADOPTIVE FAMILIES**

### **Policy**

Using a family-centered approach, the Department identifies potential *kinship* and *child-specific* foster/pre-adoptive families from within the child's kinship or community circles. Potential *unrestricted* foster/pre-adoptive families are recruited through the variety of programs the Department sponsors for this purpose. A key element in successfully engaging families is to respond rapidly to their initial indications of interest with provision of information and support regarding the role/responsibilities they are considering.

### **Identification of Kinship and Child-Specific Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**

The Department regards kinship and child-specific resources as valued partners in its work with families who need Department services. Kinship and child-specific resources provide information about the child and family and provide support to them. They are particularly valued as placement resources, because when successful they support the child in maintaining meaningful relationships, reinforce positive identifications and may facilitate linguistic, cultural and/or religious continuity.

The Department's efforts to identify kinship and child-specific resources and coordinate with them on behalf of a child receiving Department services begin with initial contact, when the child and her/his family first become known to the Department. During all Intakes, including 51B Investigations, and during Assessments, the Department seeks to identify kin and child-specific resources who may be able to support the child and family and provide placement, if necessary, by asking the parent, the child and/or others involved with the situation for the names of potential kinship or child-specific families/individuals who might be willing and able to care for the child.

If placement becomes necessary, the Department first considers the availability of an appropriate kinship or child-specific family. However, even when prospective foster/pre-adoptive placements are fully knowledgeable about the child and the reasons for placement, efforts must be made to assess carefully their ability to assure the child's safety as well as meet her/his individual needs for permanence and well-being.

### **Recruitment of Unrestricted Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**

To meet the needs of children for whom appropriate families cannot be identified from the child's own kinship or community networks, the Department carries out a variety of efforts, on statewide, regional and local levels, to recruit families from the general public. Efforts include establishment of a toll-free telephone number for receiving inquiries; designation of recruitment specialists who are regionally and area based; development and dissemination of written materials; creation of multi-media campaigns; and sponsorship of recognition and child-specific recruitment events.

## **Procedures for Recruitment / Identification of Foster / Pre-Adoptive Families**

### **1. Recruitment, Initial Inquiries & Preliminary FamilyNet Person Search.**

#### ***For Potential Kinship/Child-Specific Family:***

- The child's Social Worker explores with the child's family the availability of any kinship and/or child-specific individual/family to provide placement. The child's Social Worker considers the name(s) of individual(s) provided by the parent(s) and/or child first and, if more than one is identified, determines, with her/his Supervisor, the order in which contacts for home visits will be made.
- For each family/individual considered, the child's Social Worker conducts a preliminary Person Search on FamilyNet to determine whether the individual/family has been previously involved with the Department and if yes, how; adds information necessary to track the family/individual; documents the reason(s) why each was considered and the outcome in the dictation section of the child's case record; and commences Initial Eligibility Screening.

#### ***For Potential Unrestricted Family:***

##### **Central Office**

- Coordinates recruitment and maintains toll-free telephone line for receiving inquiries.

- Conducts a preliminary Person Search on FamilyNet to determine whether the individual/family has been previously involved with the Department and if yes, how; and adds information necessary to track the inquiry, including name, address telephone number and type of service inquirer is seeking to provide.
- Assigns inquiries to the appropriate hosting Area or Regional Office.

Area/Regional Office

- Upon receipt of an inquiry, the Family Resource Worker (FRW) completes a preliminary Person Search on FamilyNet to determine whether the individual/family has been previously involved with the Department and if yes, how; and adds information necessary to track the inquiry, including name, address, telephone number and type of service.
  - The FRW commences Initial Eligibility Screening, or when necessary, transfers the inquiry to the appropriate FRW Supervisor for assignment to complete Initial Eligibility Screening.
2. **Interstate Compact Request.** For out-of-state *kinship* placement of a child in Department custody ONLY (including custody under a CHINS order), the child's Social Worker completes and submits an "Interstate Compact Request", through her/his Supervisor and APM, within 10 working days after identification of the potential placement and receipt of the information needed to contact the family.

## INITIAL ELIGIBILITY SCREENING

### Policy

To determine that a family or individual meets the Department's minimum requirements of eligibility to apply to become a Department foster/pre-adoptive family, the Department conducts an initial eligibility screening. This process commences with an initial visit to the home. During this visit or subsequent visits the home's ability to meet basic health and safety standards is evaluated. Interviews are conducted with at least one potential foster/pre-adoptive parent (**for kinship/child-specific families** with whom emergency placement of a child is anticipated, all household members present must be interviewed, as appropriate to age and verbal capacity, and an individual interview must be conducted with at least one potential foster/pre-adoptive parent). During the visit(s) the family is provided with a copy of the Department's "Family Resource Application" and is given guidance in how to complete it. Sufficient information is obtained regarding the members of the household to enable background records checks to be completed on all household members age 14 years and older and younger household members about whom concerns exist.

The outcome of initial eligibility screening is a determination that the family/individual meets the following "Standards of Eligibility to Apply" and "Standards for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes":

#### **Standards for Eligibility to Apply**

- Any individual providing foster/pre-adoptive care must have reached her/his 18th birthday. The parent of a child to be placed in foster/pre-adoptive care is not eligible to be a foster/pre-adoptive parent for that child. All approved foster/pre-adoptive parents are eligible to receive reimbursement for children placed in their home. This reimbursement is equal to the standard foster care rate for a child of that age.
- All household members, age 14 years and older, must have a record which is free of criminal conduct which, in the judgment of the Department, bears upon the foster/pre-adoptive family's ability to assume and carry out the responsibilities of a foster/pre-adoptive parent. (See *Policy #86-014, Background Records Check Policy*, and *Regulations, 110 CMR 18.000 et seq.*)
- No member of the household has currently or, during the 12 months prior to completion of Initial Eligibility Screening, has had a Department open case. The hosting Regional Director may approve a waiver, based on a review of supporting information and the approval of a clinical review team, for one of the following exceptions:
  - The individual/household member has a Department open case to receive services following an adoption legalization.
  - The individual/household member has a Department open case to receive services on behalf of a child for whom a household member is a guardian.
  - The family is a prospective KINSHIP placement (ONLY), and the household member who has the open case is the teen parent of a child to be placed, the teen parent is not the person alleged to be responsible for the physical or sexual abuse of any child in a supported 51B investigation, and it is considered to be in the child's best interests for the teen parent to be a member of that kinship household
  - Any other circumstance approved by the Regional Director, upon the recommendation of a Regional clinical review team.

No member of the household has been identified as the person alleged to be responsible for abuse or neglect of a child in a supported 51B investigation and the report which identified her/him is referred to the District Attorney.

- No member of the household has a history of involvement with the Department which would bear adversely on the prospective foster/pre-adoptive parent's ability to assume and carry out foster/adoption responsibilities.
- The family/individual has a stable source of income for support of current household members (in situations other than emergency placement, the Department will consider whether the family whose stable source of income is T-AFDC has a plan for maintaining a stable income if the T-AFDC will terminate during the child's anticipated period of placement with the family).

- The family/individual has a stable housing history and current housing which meets the Department's physical requirements and currently has sufficient space to accommodate at least one additional household member within the Department's limits for maximum number of children residing in the home.
- At least one prospective applicant in the household has a basic ability to read and write in English or in the family's primary language.
- The prospective applicant(s) has sufficient time and availability to be a foster/ pre-adoptive parent(s). A foster/pre-adoptive parent may place a foster/pre-adoptive child in work-related child care for no more than 50 hours per week for a pre-school age child or 25 hours per week for a child in grade 1 or up.
- No animal that poses a danger to a foster/pre-adoptive child is maintained on the premises of the home.

### **Standards for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes**

- Home must be clean, safe, free of obvious fire and other hazards, and of sufficient size to accommodate comfortably and appropriately all members of the household and the approved number of foster/pre-adoptive children. (See Appendix 3, "[Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines](#)")
- Home must have safe and adequate lighting, ventilation, hot and cold water supply, plumbing, electricity and heat.
- Home must be furnished with a refrigerator and cooking stove in safe, working condition.
- No foster/pre-adoptive child over age one year shall share a bedroom with an adult.
- No foster/pre-adoptive child over age 4 years, except for siblings up to age 8 years, shall share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.
- Home must have sufficient furniture to allow each child to sleep in a separate bed and to have adequate storage space for her/his personal belongings.
- Home must have bedrooms which provide at least 50 square feet per child; the Department may waive this requirement **for kinship homes** if the bedrooms provide at least 35 square feet per child.
- No bedroom to be used by foster/pre-adoptive children shall be located above the second floor unless any such floor has 2 safe means of egress.
- No bedroom to be used by foster/pre-adoptive children shall be located below the first floor unless it contains a ground level, standard door exit and at least one operable window.
- The home shall be equipped with smoke detectors in working order on every floor, including the basement.
- If well water is used, it shall be tested and determined safe, and a report of the test results furnished to the Department.
- The home must not have any household member, alternative caretaker or frequent visitor who would, in the judgment of the Department, pose a threat of abuse or neglect to children placed in the home, or would impede or prevent the provision of adequate foster/pre-adoptive care in the home.
- Any firearms located in the home shall be registered and licensed in accordance with state law. All firearms shall be trigger-locked or fully inoperable and stored without ammunition in a locked area. Ammunition shall be stored in a separate locked location.
- The family/individual has a working telephone in the home for both incoming and outgoing calls.
- All dogs maintained on the premises of the foster/pre-adoptive home must have up to date vaccinations and rabies shots, and must be licensed in accordance with local authority requirements.
- No child under age 12 will be placed in a home where a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd dog, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of these 3 breeds, is maintained on the premises, except after a review conducted in accordance with [Regulation 110 CMR 7.105 \(18\)](#) and with the approval of the Area Director.
- Any home that is used for family child care must be in compliance with the requirements of EEC, as set forth in EEC Regulations 102 CMR 8.06 – 8.09.

Families/individuals who are determined not to be eligible to apply based upon the “Standards for Eligibility to Apply” and the “Standards for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes” do not have the right to appeal that determination. [See *Regulation 110 CMR 7.100 (6)*]

For kinship care resources, supports should be available which are intended to strengthen the ability of parents and kin to meet the needs of their children within their own family, recognizing the importance to children of identity, connectedness and roots.

### **Initial Eligibility Screening Procedures**

1. **Initial Background Record Check (BRC).** If the date of birth or at least approximate age is known for any family member(s), the child’s Social Worker (**for a prospective kinship or child-specific foster/pre-adoptive family**) or the Family Resource Worker (FRW) (**for a prospective unrestricted foster/pre-adoptive family**), in conjunction with her/his Supervisor, considers requesting a BRC check, including CORI, from the BRC Unit. If the findings do not indicate that the family is ineligible to apply or if any required approvals are obtained, the child’s Social Worker or FRW, as applicable, begins to arrange the initial home visit. The potential placement has 10 working days to agree to be considered. (See *Policy #86-014, Background Records Check Policy*)

2. **Initial Eligibility Screening Home Visit(s).**

**For a Potential Kinship or Child-Specific Family:** (See Procedure 7 below for procedures when emergency placement prior to completion of the full License study is being considered)

- Is initiated by the child’s Social Worker by telephone, if possible, or by sending “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Potential Placement: Initial Inquiry” by certified mail.
- Is confirmed by the child’s Social Worker, in writing, using “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Potential Placement: Initial Meeting” which states the date and time the initial home visit will occur.
- Occurs within 10 working days after potential placement agrees to be considered.
- Includes an interview with at least one potential foster/pre-adoptive parent which explores:
  - motivation;
  - understanding of the family resource role;
  - orientation, pre-licensing training, and the assessment process;
  - ability to promote continuity for the identified child;
  - current relationship with the child and parents;
  - understanding of reason(s) for removal/Department role; and
  - ability to work with parent(s) and the Department.
- Includes completion of “Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes”. (See Appendix 3, “Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines”)
- Includes a review of informational materials with the family.
- Includes giving the family a copy of the “Family Resource Application” and assisting them in beginning its completion (child’s Social Worker documents this information in dictation); sufficient information is obtained to conduct BRC checks.

**For a Potential Unrestricted Family:**

- Is initiated by the FRW, by telephone, normally within 2 working days after the initial inquiry was received/registered.
- Occurs prior to participation in Department-approved foster/pre-adoptive family training.
- Includes an interview with at least one potential foster/pre-adoptive parent which explores:
  - motivation;
  - understanding of the family resource role;
  - orientation, pre-licensing training, and the assessment process;
  - ability to promote continuity for children placed with them; and

- determination of the preference to provide foster or pre-adoptive care for any family who is undecided.
  - Includes completion of “Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes”. (See Appendix 3, “**Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines**”)
  - Includes a review of informational materials with the family.
  - Includes giving the family a copy of the “Family Resource Application” and assisting them in beginning its completion (FRW documents this information in dictation); sufficient information is obtained to conduct BRC checks.
3. **Background Records Checks.** Using information obtained during the initial home visit(s), the child’s Social Worker (**for the potential kinship or child-specific family**) or FRW (**for the potential unrestricted family**) initiates background record checks, including CORI checks, on all household members age 14 years and older (and younger household members about whom concerns exist) and obtains any necessary approvals, in accordance with *Policy #86-014, Background Records Check Policy*.

*NOTE: Approval for the placement of a child with a **potential kinship or child-specific family** may be requested on an emergency basis prior to completion of the full License Study regardless of the type of BRC findings. (See Background Records Check Policy cited above and Procedure 7 below) When a household member has a “lifetime presumptive disqualifying criminal conviction,” emergency placement can be completed **ONLY with a kinship family** and requires the prior approval of the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations, General Counsel and Commissioner through the Area Director/designee and Regional Director/designee.*

4. **Contacts for Verification.** The FRW completes contacts for verification of housing and income stability, as determined necessary in consultation with the FR Supervisor. Such checks may be completed by the child’s Social Worker, if determined necessary in consultation with the Supervisor, when placement of a child with a **kinship** or a **child-specific** family prior to completion of the full License Study is being considered.
5. **Provision of Assistance & Waivers of Physical Requirements (For Kinship Homes ONLY).**
- The child’s Social Worker, in consultation with her/his Supervisor, submits recommendations for approval to the placing Area Director/designee regarding resources the potential kinship family needs to overcome identified barriers/obstacles to caring for the child, e.g., child care, smoke detectors, transportation, parent aide services, referrals.
  - The child’s Social Worker or FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor, may request the approval of the hosting Area Director/designee to waive temporarily the following Department of Early Education and Care physical requirements for the 30 working day period during which the kinship family’s full License Study is completed:
    - “sufficient furniture to allow each child to...have adequate storage space for her/his personal belongings”; and
    - “homes with well water will be tested and the water determined safe and a report of the test is furnished to the Department” [the Department will assist in obtaining a water test and/or identify an alternate source of water (e.g., bottled water) during the 30 working day period of the full License Study].
  - The child’s Social Worker or the FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor, may request the approval of the hosting Area Director/designee to waive the requirement that the home has “bedrooms which provide at least 50 square feet per child” for kinship families who have at least 35 square feet per child of bedroom space available.
6. **Waiver for a Presumptively Disqualifying Dog Breed in the Home.** Prior to placement of a child under age 12 years in a home where a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd dog, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of these 3 breeds is maintained, or prior to the placement of any child in a home where another type of potentially dangerous pet/animal is maintained, the child’s Social Worker or FRW obtains Area Director/designee approval based on a review that meets the requirements of Appendix 4, “Waivers for Placement of Children in Homes with Presumptively Disqualifying Dog Breeds or Other Potentially Dangerous Pets/Animals”.

7. **Emergency Placement (*Kinship or Child-Specific Homes ONLY*)**. A child may be placed with a ***kinship*** or ***child-specific*** family, on an emergency basis prior to completion of the full License Study when:
- initial interviews have been completed with all household members present, as appropriate to age and verbal capacity, including an individual interview with at least one potential foster/pre-adoptive parent, and she/he has committed to completing the full assessment and approval process (initial interviews with remaining verbal household members must be completed within 10 working days after the child is placed with the family);
  - the “Family Resource Application” has been completed and signed;
  - background records checks have been completed on each household member age 14 and older and those younger about whom concerns exist, and any necessary approvals have been obtained;
  - a home visit and the “Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes” have been completed to determine that the home meets health and safety requirements, including the “Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines”;
  - the placing Area Director/designee agrees; **and**
  - if different, the hosting Area Director/designee is informed of the placement.

The ***kinship*** or ***child-specific*** foster/pre-adoptive family is reimbursed for care and maintenance provided to the child as of the date the Department approves placement of the child with the family regardless of whether the license is subsequently granted or not (i.e., as of the “Date of Placement” on the “Child Placement Agreement”).

8. **Outcome of Initial Eligibility Screening:** The child’s Social Worker and Supervisor (***for a potential kinship or child-specific family***) or the FRW and FR Supervisor (***for a potential unrestricted family***) determine whether potential foster/pre-adoptive family meets “Standards for Eligibility to Apply” and “Standards for Foster/ Pre-Adoptive Homes”:
- **Eligible to Apply: *For a kinship or child-specific home***, the child’s Social Worker documents the outcome in the case record and informs her/his Supervisor that the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family is ready to be transferred; the Supervisor forwards the completed BRC check information and the “Physical Requirements for Foster/Adoptive Homes” and completes the relevant FamilyNet screens to transfer the family to the Area Office Family Resource Unit, normally within 2 working days after any emergency placement or after the completion of the BRC process. If the family is being transferred for assignment out-of-area, the FR Supervisor reviews the materials and completes the out-of-area FamilyNet transfer. ***For an unrestricted home***, the FR Supervisor notifies the family, in writing, within 30 calendar days after receipt of the completed Application, that they have been determined eligible to apply through Initial Eligibility Screening and will be scheduled for Department-approved foster/pre-licensing training and assigned for completion of the License Study.
  - **Not Eligible to Apply: *For a kinship or child-specific home***, the child’s Social Worker sends the appropriate notice to inform the family normally within 2 working days after the outcome of Person Search or other BRC process or initial interview/home visit. ***For an unrestricted home***, the FRW sends the appropriate notice normally within 2 working days after the “not eligible to apply” decision is made. She/he places a copy of the notice and all materials utilized during initial eligibility screening in the case record and documents the outcome and reason(s) for it in dictation.
  - **Family Withdraws from Consideration:** The child’s Social Worker confirms a potential ***kinship*** or ***child-specific*** family’s withdrawal from consideration, in writing, using “Notice to Potential Kinship/Child-Specific Family: Not Available”; or the FRW confirms a potential ***unrestricted*** family’s withdrawal from consideration, in writing, using “Notice to Potential Unrestricted Family: Not Available.” She/he places a copy of the notice and all materials utilized during initial eligibility screening in the case record and documents the outcome and the reason(s) for it in dictation.
  - **Family Does Not Complete Application:** If the family does not submit a completed Application within 30 calendar days after the family receives it, the child’s Social Worker (***for a potential kinship or child-specific family***) or FRW (***for a potential unrestricted family***) attempts to contact the family and sends a written notification explaining the Department’s intention to close

the family's file in 30 calendar days, if the Department is unable to contact the family and make arrangements for completion of the Application. If, 30 calendar days after the written notification is sent, the child's Social Worker's (or FRW's) attempts have been unsuccessful and the completed Application has not been received, the child's Social Worker (or FRW) documents the Department's attempts and the family's lack of response in dictation and closes file.

9. **Determining License Study Order for Multiple Potential Kinship/Child-Specific Families.** If more than one family has participated in an initial home visit, continues to desire to be considered as a potential placement, and has been determined to be eligible to apply, the child's Social Worker, in consultation with her/his Supervisor, determines the order in which the License Study for these resources will be initiated by the FR Unit, considering at least the following factors:

- ability to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the specific child being considered for placement;
- ability to promote continuity of significant connections the child has to her/his family, community, school, service providers, etc.;
- nature and quality of the current relationship with the child and the child's parent(s), including the child's/parent's preferences regarding the resource as a placement; demonstrated historic and current frequency of contact;
- understanding of the need to remove the child from the parent(s)' home; acknowledgement and agreement that a problem exists that warrants intervention by the Department;
- ability to work with the parent(s) and the Department—the extent to which the potential foster/pre-adoptive family understands the need for limit-setting with the child's parent(s) and her/his receptiveness to working as a partner with the Department toward accomplishing the goal(s) of the Service Plan;
- ability to access appropriate services for the child (both within the Department and the community) and to develop an appropriate support network adequate to meet the child's needs;
- motivation—i.e., the reason(s) why the potential foster/pre-adoptive family is interested in becoming a placement resource for this child;
- previous involvement—the extent of the potential foster/pre-adoptive family's past history and role in helping to protect the child from abuse and/or neglect;
- current involvement—understanding of the present problem(s) and willingness and ability to care for and protect the child, especially when the teen parent of the child has a Department open case, and a clinical review team has approved the parent's as well as the child's placement in the home;
- inter-generational family functioning—assessment of the roles, rules, patterns of communication, behaviors, boundaries, limit setting, and family interactions within the extended family constellation; and
- willingness to be the permanent family for the child, if this becomes necessary.

## LICENSE STUDY

### Policy

To assure quality of care, children who are in Department care or custody are placed only in fully assessed, prepared and licensed homes. The only exception is when the procedures provided above under “Emergency Placement Prior to Completion of Full License Study” are followed to obtain emergency approval of the placement of a child with a kinship or child-specific resource.

A full License Study by the designated Department office or agency is initiated, completed and approved or denied as follows:

- **For kinship or child-specific foster/pre-adoptive families:** Within 40 working days after the placement of a child or, if no child is placed, the completion of Initial Eligibility Screening. *NOTE: Management is responsible for maintaining a system for assignment that affords the Family Resource Worker a minimum of 30 working days to complete the License Study.*
- **For unrestricted foster/pre-adoptive families:** Within 30 working days after the last meeting of the Department-approved foster/pre-adoptive family pre-licensing training program.

All prospective foster/pre-adoptive applicants must successfully complete the Department-approved pre-licensing education, support, and training program specified for the type of licensing they are seeking. If a couple is applying, both are required to be trained. An exception to completion of the program may be granted to prospective applicants under certain specified circumstances. (See Appendix 1, “Waivers of Pre-Licensing Training for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families”)

To be licensed as an **unrestricted** foster or pre-adoptive family, applicants must successfully complete the Department-approved combined pre-licensing training and assessment program. The philosophy of this program is that the Department and persons seeking to become licensed as unrestricted families are team members, partnering in the process of permanency planning. The program integrates preparation for the role of foster/pre-adoptive family with the assessment process, an approach that emphasizes shared decision-making, problem-solving, and mutual selection. If a kinship or child-specific family also wishes to be licensed to provide unrestricted foster/pre-adoptive pre-licensing training and assessment program for unrestricted families.

When a court grants custody of a child to the Department, the Department assumes responsibility for determining where the child is placed, although the court may recommend that the Department consider placement of the child with a particular family. The Department assesses the court-recommended family in accordance with the policy and procedures established for child-specific families, along with any other kinship or child-specific family who may be identified for that child.

Following completion of the written License Study and a determination that the family meets the “Standards for Licensing”, all foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) will enter into an agreement between the Department and the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s). This agreement indicates the type of licensure the family received according to the categories described below:

- kinship,
- child-specific, or
- unrestricted.

### **Standards for Licensing**

- Foster/pre-adoptive parent(s), through the successful completion of the Department’s License Study and of the Department-approved foster/pre-adoptive family pre-licensing training program specified for the type of licensing they are seeking, must demonstrate skill in parenting and providing substitute care including the following:
  1. The physical and emotional stability and well-being to assure that a child placed in her/his care will experience a safe, supportive and stable family environment which is free from abuse and neglect.

2. The ability to assure that a child placed in her/his care will be provided with adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision and other essential care at all times.
  3. The ability to assure that a child placed in her/his care will be provided with routine and emergency medical and dental care.
  4. The ability to assure that a child in her/his care will be expected to attend school regularly and will be provided with the opportunity for participating in an educational program and extracurricular activities which meet her/his needs.
  5. The ability to promote the physical, mental and emotional well-being of a child in her/his care.
  6. The ability to draw upon community and professional resources as needed.
  7. The ability to transport children within standards set by state law.
  8. The ability to respect the integrity of a foster/pre-adoptive child's racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious background.
  9. The ability to manage the stressful situations which are frequently associated with the placement of a child such as the temporary nature of the placement, the integration of a child in crisis into the family, and the potential return of the child to his/her family.
  10. The ability to assist the foster/pre-adoptive child in handling their situation, such as removal from the home of their parent(s); placement in a new home environment, including a new school (when applicable); visits with parents and siblings; and possible return to the home of the parent(s) or placement in other substitute care.
  11. The ability to deal with difficult issues in the foster/pre-adoptive child's background and to be able to talk with the child comfortably and constructively about her/his birthparents and family.
  12. The ability to have reasonable expectations of foster/pre-adoptive children's behavior and potential growth.
  13. The ability to respect and be bound by the same standards of confidentiality as the Department and its employees.
  14. The ability to accept and support the foster/pre-adoptive child's relationship with her/his parents and the Department.
  15. The ability to work with the Department and the foster/pre-adoptive child's parents in implementing the child's Service Plan in order to meet developmental goals and outcomes.
  16. The ability to develop with the Department, and to participate in, training, education, and support, as specified in the family's Department-approved annual "Professional Development Plan," to assist the family in meeting the needs of the children placed in their care.
  17. The ability to assume and carry out all responsibilities of a foster/pre-adoptive parent as detailed in the agreement between the Department and the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s).
- Foster/pre-adoptive parent applicants must be free of any physical, mental or emotional illness which, in the judgment of the Department would impair her/his ability to assume and carry out the responsibilities of a foster/pre-adoptive parent. No handicap in and of itself shall disqualify an individual from serving as a foster/pre-adoptive parent.
  - Foster/pre-adoptive applicants must not provide, or seek to provide, foster/pre-adoptive care to a child solely for the purpose of applying for or receiving fees, income or other benefits from public or private sources for anyone other than the foster/pre-adoptive child.

An applicant may appeal a decision by the Department not to license her/his application to become a foster/pre-adoptive parent. [See *Regulation 110 CMR 7.10 (4)*] An applicant may not appeal a decision by the Department not to continue a License Study when the Department obtains information which, if known at the time of initial eligibility screening, would have excluded her/him from applying to become a foster/pre-adoptive parent. [See *Regulation 110 CMR 10.07 (3)*]

### **License Study Procedures**

1. **Assignment.** Normally, within 2 working days after receiving the FamilyNet transfer and supportive documentation (*for the kinship/child –specific foster/pre-adoptive family*) or after completing

initial eligibility screening (**for the unrestricted foster/pre-adoptive family**), the Family Resource Supervisor (FR Supervisor) provides for the following tasks to be completed:

- the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family is assigned to a FRW;
- the paper Foster/Adoptive Family Record is established (if not previously established); or
- if necessary, the family is transferred to the hosting Office for assignment.

2. **Orientation, Training and Support.** The prospective foster/pre-adoptive family is provided with an invitation, in writing, to attend, and/or the materials necessary to complete, the Department-approved orientation, education, and support program specified for the type of license they are seeking, within 30 working days after their completed “Family Resource Application” has been received. This requirement may be waived by memo to the hosting Area Director/designee or Regional director/designee (as assigned):

- if the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family has recent previous comparable and relevant training and/or experience, **and** no intervening family changes which warrant additional preparation; **OR**
- if one co-applicant has an acceptable reason for being unable to complete the program (i.e., health, employment, or family responsibility) **and** a plan to replicate content.

(See Appendix 1, “Waivers of Pre-Licensing Training for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families”)

The **kinship or child-specific family** who wants to be licensed as an unrestricted home is required to complete successfully the program required for unrestricted families.

3. **License Study Time Frames.** A full License Study by the designated Department office or agency is initiated, completed and approved or denied as follows:

- **For kinship or child-specific foster/pre-adoptive families:** Within 40 working days after the placement of a child or, if no child is placed, the completion of Initial Eligibility Screening. *NOTE: Management is responsible for maintaining a system for assignment that affords the Family Resource Worker a minimum of 30 working days to complete the License Study.*
- **For the unrestricted family:** Within 30 working days after the last pre-service training meeting (or after being informed of the approval of a pre-service training waiver).

4. **License Study.** (See Appendix 2, “Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family License Study Guide”) The FRW completes the License Study which includes:

- Prequalification updated within 5 working days prior to completion of the License Study (i.e., approval based on review of background records checks on all household members age 14 and older and those younger about whom concerns exist—see *Policy #86-014, Background Records Check Policy*).
- Confirmation of other standards for eligibility to apply, as determined necessary in consultation with FR Supervisor, including contacts for verification of housing and income stability by persons other than those identified by the family as references.
- **For the kinship or child-specific family:** A home visit, within 5 working days after assignment if a child has been placed in the home on an emergency basis or within 12 working days after assignment if no child has yet been placed, during which the “Family Resource Application” is completed and signed “Notification of Authorization to Release Information” forms are obtained; and at least 1 subsequent home visit.
- **For the unrestricted family:** At least 3 interviews, at least 2 of which are home visits.
- At least 1 interview with each household member as appropriate to her/his age and verbal capacity, including an individual interview with each applicant.
- Confirmation of the home's compliance with health and safety standards as documented in the “Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes” (must be completed during the FRW's initial visit to a **kinship or child-specific family** with whom a child has been placed on an emergency basis). (See Appendix 3, “Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines”)
- Review of written references as follows:

- 1 **medical** reference for each household member,
  - 1 **employer** reference for each employed applicant and 1 for head of household—if not an applicant,
  - 1 **school** reference for each school age child living in the home and each younger child who participates in a pre-school or child care program, and
  - 2 **personal** references—may include relatives and clergy; and
  - information from contacts for verification, as determined necessary in consultation with the FR Supervisor.
- A review of factors in *Policy #85-011*, Assessment Policy, Appendix C, “**Substance Abuse Protocol**”, and Appendix D, “**Domestic Violence Protocol**”.
  - **For the kinship or child-specific family:** A conference with the child's Social Worker PRIOR to the final License Study decision.
  - **For the unrestricted family:** A review of the family's ability to meet the Department-approved foster/pre-adoptive family pre-licensing training criteria for mutual selection to provide foster care/adoption.
  - Completion of the License Study in FamilyNet, including **for the unrestricted family recommended for licensing:** recommendations re: the number, gender, age, and characteristics of the children who may be placed in the home.
5. **Suspension of License Study Completion.** Applicant(s) may request a suspension for good cause (e.g., death of a family member, necessary renovations, etc.) provided no child has yet been placed in the home.
- License Study completion may be suspended for up to 3 months. The FRW considers the request, in consultation with the FR Supervisor, and notifies the applicant of the outcome, within 5 working days after the request was received, using the “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Applicant: Suspension Granted.”
6. **When Determined Ineligible to Apply.** During the License Study, when the FRW obtains information which indicates the applicant was not eligible to apply, she/he, in consultation with the FR Supervisor, discontinues the License Study and notifies the hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned). The hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned) notifies the family of the decision, in writing, using “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Applicant: License Study Discontinued Due to Ineligibility to Apply.” The family does not have the right to appeal. **For the kinship or child-specific home,** if a child has been placed in the home on an emergency basis, see “Removal of Children from Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes”.
7. **Licensing Decision.** The FRW, FR Supervisor and hosting Area Director or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) determine whether or not the family and home meet the “Standards for Licensing,” in addition to the “Standards for Eligibility to Apply” and the “Standards for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes.”
8. **When Licensed.** The FRW:
- Completes the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent Agreement with the family, placing the original in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record with a copy to the family;
  - Gives the family information regarding Department-approved foster/pre-adoptive family in-service training and completes a “Professional Development Plan” with them;
  - Documents the family's receipt of all required information with the “Required Information Verification” form; and
  - Informs the child's Social Worker and the Department Attorney (if court involved) of the License Study outcome by telephone or electronic mail and by sending a copy of the notice sent to the family.

Within 10 working days after the decision to license, the hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) notifies the family, in writing, using the “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Applicant: License Granted” or “Notice to Unrestricted Applicant: License Granted,” as applicable.

9. **When *NOT* Licensed.** Within 10 working days after the decision not to license, the hosting Area Director or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) notifies the applicant of the outcome, in writing, using the “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Applicant: License Denied” or the “Notice to Unrestricted Applicant: License Denied,” as applicable, which includes information regarding appeal rights.

***If a kinship or child-specific family is not licensed,*** the FRW informs the child's Social Worker and the Department Attorney (if court involved) of the outcome by telephone or electronic mail and by sending a copy of the notice sent to the family.

10. **When DENIAL OF LICENSE Recommended and Child Resides in the Home (*For Kinship/Child-Specific Applicants ONLY*).** The hosting Area Director verbally informs the placing Area Director of the recommendation.

The hosting and placing Area Directors confer. If the Area Directors disagree, the placing Area Director requests the approval of the Regional Director to continue the placement until the decision is made to approve/not approve. The Regional Director convenes a clinical review team for advice. If more than one region is involved, the hosting Regional Director convenes the clinical review. If no agreement is reached, the hosting Regional Director refers the matter to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations/designee. Within 10 working days after the recommendation to deny licensing, a final decision is made. If the outcome is that the license is denied, the child is removed following the procedures below. (See “Removal of Children from a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family”)

11. **Providing Family with License Study.** Upon written request by the applicant, the FRW provides a copy of the License Study to her/him.

## PLACEMENT SUPPORT

### Policy

Placement of children with foster/pre-adoptive families represents a significant, life-altering experience for everyone involved. When efforts to strengthen a family do not ensure child safety, the Department carries out placement in a planned and thoughtful manner, continuing to seek the family's collaboration and build on its strengths whenever possible, while holding paramount the child's needs for safety and permanency. As stated in the introduction, when the Department determines that placement in a family setting will meet the child's needs, the Department first attempts to identify a family resource from within the child's kinship or community network. When no suitable kinship or child-specific family is available, the child's Social Worker, in collaboration with Family Resource staff, identifies an unrestricted family for the child's placement.

The Department regards the foster/pre-adoptive family resource as a partner in meeting the placed child's needs while working to build upon and enhance her/his family's strengths. To support the foster/pre-adoptive family in this shared endeavor, the child's Social Worker and the Family Resource Worker (FRW) jointly undertake a variety of tasks, which are specified in the applicable sections of the "Child Placement Agreement" and the agreement between the Department and the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) as well as in related policies and regulations. The Department further seeks to support foster/pre-adoptive families through: (1) regular, supportive contact with the Social Workers of the children placed in the home; (2) regular, supportive contact with the FRW which is relatively intensive during the family's initial 6 month probationary period; and (3) establishing capacity requirements regarding the number of children who may be cared for in the home.

### **Contacts with Licensed Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**

The goal of regular visitation by Department staff to the foster/pre-adoptive family is to support them in carrying out their role in this collaborative approach to meeting the needs of the placed child while working to build upon and enhance her/his family's strengths through:

- sharing of information regarding the child in placement, her/his family, and the Service Plan goals and objectives, particularly those related to the foster/pre-adoptive family;
- timely identification of changes or issues that may affect the foster/pre-adoptive family's effectiveness;
- timely response to concerns the foster/pre-adoptive family has regarding the Department-placed child's needs and best interests and the foster/pre-adoptive family's role; and
- encouraging the foster/pre-adoptive family to participate in education and training programs that may assist them in meeting the child's needs.

(See *Policy #86-011*, [Ongoing Casework Policy, Procedures and Documentation](#))

After the family has been licensed, the FRW normally contacts the family at least monthly. During the **probationary period** [i.e., the first 6 months after a foster/pre-adoptive child has been placed in the home], the monthly contacts will normally be home visits.

At the end of the 6 month probationary period, the FRW indicates in dictation a recommendation regarding the family. If the license is to be continued, the FRW indicates any changes to made; if the license is to be revoked, she/he so indicates and initiates appropriate procedures. (See "Removal of Children from Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes" and "Closing of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes")

After the probationary period ends, the FRW normally visits the **foster** family at least once every other month. For **pre-adoptive** families who have a pre-adoptive child placed with them (no foster children), the FRW normally visits the family at least once every other month. For pre-adoptive families who have no child placed with them, the FRW contacts the pre-adoptive parent(s) at least monthly; at least one home visit is required 6 months after the family's date of licensing.

### **Establishing Capacity Re: Maximum Number of Children in a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Home**

The Department establishes capacity limits regarding the maximum number of foster/pre-adoptive children a family can accept for a number of reasons, in addition to meeting the requirements of the Department of Early Education and Care. (See EEC Regulations 102 CMR 5.02) By limiting the number of children placed with a foster/pre-adoptive family, the Department seeks to ensure that the family is able to meet each placed child's needs as well as those of other household members. The Department is particularly concerned that the family is able to meet these needs on the sustained, intensive level required when caring for children who have histories like those in Department care and custody, while carrying out their other responsibilities in this important partnership role.

The following summarizes the capacity limits the Department has established for foster/pre-adoptive homes:

- Up to 4 foster/pre-adoptive children may be placed in a foster/pre-adoptive home at one time, including Hotline placements and children placed for respite purposes. *[NOTE: Adopted children and children in closed guardianship cases, including those receiving subsidy, are not counted as "foster/pre-adoptive children."]*
- During the **probationary period**, up to 2 foster/pre-adoptive children may be placed in a foster/pre-adoptive home *at any one time*, including Hotline placements and children placed for respite purposes.
- The number of children being cared for at one time in a foster/pre-adoptive home will not exceed a total of 6 under age 18 years, including foster/pre-adoptive, biological and adopted children—related or unrelated—and children receiving child care and/or babysitting. Youth in Department care who are over age 18 are also counted toward the limit unless: (1) the youth receives care and maintenance payments directly, or (2) the hosting Area Director has approved a waiver.
- Of the total of 6 children being cared for in the foster/pre-adoptive home, up to 2 children may be age 24 months or younger and only one child may be age one month or younger, except for siblings with the approval of the hosting Regional Director.
- Families who provide child care in their homes must adhere to EEC requirements regarding the number of children who may be cared for in the home at one time. (See EEC Regulations 102 CMR 8.06 – 8.09)

The foster/pre-adoptive family may decide that it will not be available to accept placements from the Department for a period of time of up to 6 months determined jointly with the Department (e.g., due to the illness of a household member or relative, a vacation or other family event). The Department indicates the family's lack of availability in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record and FamilyNet information. During this period, the Department completes the regularly scheduled Annual Reassessment or License Renewal Study. The foster/pre-adoptive family is not required to re-apply or to complete a new License Study to resume accepting placements.

### **Policy: Waivers on the Maximum Number of Children in a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Home**

- With the approval of the hosting Regional Director, a waiver may be obtained to exceed the limit of 6 children in certain circumstances as specified below; however, in no case will the number of children being cared for in a foster/pre-adoptive home exceed 8 under age 18 years:
  - for an emergency placement in a **pre-authorized Hotline, respite, or family child care home**; OR
  - for placement of **siblings** or **replacement of a foster/pre-adoptive child** in a foster/pre-adoptive home.
- The hosting Area Director may approve a waiver for allowing a youth in Department care or custody who receives her/his care and maintenance payments directly to be excluded from the total number of children receiving care in the household.
- During the **probationary period**, with the approval of the hosting Regional Director, a waiver may be obtained to exceed the limit of 2 foster/pre-adoptive children at any one time only for the purpose of

placing **siblings**; however, in no case will the total number of children being cared for in the foster/pre-adoptive home exceed 8 under age 18 years.

### **Procedures: Waivers on the Maximum Number of Children in a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Home**

1. **Waiver Request.** The placing Area Director completes the waiver request on FamilyNet which is sent to the hosting Regional Director (cc: to the hosting Area Director), indicating:
  - names, dates of birth, and relationship(s) to foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) of all children currently in the home;
  - name(s) and date(s) of birth of the child recommended for placement;
  - the reason(s) why the proposed placement is in the child's best interests;
  - efforts to locate an alternative placement, including outreach to kin;
  - other relevant information; and
  - the hosting Area Director's recommendation (if applicable).
2. **Hosting RD Review.** The hosting Regional Director informs the Area Director(s) of the decision to approve/not approve the waiver request within 7 working days. If more than one Regional Director is involved and they disagree, the issue is referred for resolution to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations who resolves it within 7 working days.

### **Approval of Family-Based Living Arrangements for Youth Age 18 Years and Older Who are Continuing in Placement**

When a youth over age 18 years who is continuing in placement under a Voluntary Placement Agreement which she/he has signed on her/his own behalf locates a family with whom she/he would like to live on a temporary or permanent basis, the youth's Social Worker encourages the family to seek licensing as a child-specific family. If the family does not seek payment from the Department for care of the youth, the youth's Social Worker determines the adequacy of the living arrangement by completing:

- background records checks on all household members age 14 years and older and on younger household members about whom concerns exist; and
- a home visit that reviews the circumstances and considers the individuals with whom the youth is residing to determine that the living situation is safe, conducive to the youth's physical and emotional well-being, and supportive of the youth's permanency goal and Service Plan.

She/he documents the information obtained in dictation.

## **ANNUAL AND LIMITED REASSESSMENTS, AND LICENSE RENEWAL STUDIES**

### **Policy**

The purposes of **Annual Reassessments** and **License Renewal Studies** are to review the family's provision of foster/pre-adoptive care services since the initial License Study or last Reassessment/License Renewal Study and jointly determine what supports are needed to encourage the family's willingness and ability to continue providing foster/pre-adoptive care services. The additional purpose of **License Renewal Studies** is to determine that the licensing standards continue to be met and the license should be renewed.

The purpose of **REQUIRED Limited Reassessments** is to determine if the issues in the supported 51B Investigation, the reasons for an emergency removal initiated by the Department, or the residence to which a family is moving impact the family's ability to continue providing adequate foster/pre-adoptive care services and/or to collect information about the family to use in determining whether a child should continue to reside with the family or whether a new placement should be made.

The purpose of **OPTIONAL Limited Reassessments** is to determine if and how the situations warranting the Limited Reassessment affect the family's ability to continue providing adequate foster/pre-adoptive care services.

A foster/pre-adoptive parent has the right to request a fair hearing regarding a determination by the Department to revoke the license of a foster/pre-adoptive home, following an Annual or Limited Reassessment; or a License Renewal Study. [See *Regulation 110 CMR 10.06 (4) (c)*] A foster/pre-adoptive parent also has the right to request a grievance when she/he disagrees with a determination by the Department regarding the age, sex, number, and characteristics of children who may be placed in her/his home.

### **Procedures: Annual Reassessments**

1. **Time Frames for Conducting the Annual Reassessment.** The first Annual Reassessment is due 12 months after the date of initial licensing, and Reassessments are scheduled to occur every 12 months after the intervening License Renewal Study approval date (i.e., biannually). The Reassessment is due to the Supervisor 30 working days prior to due date.
2. **Responsibility for Conducting the Annual Reassessment.** The Family Resource Worker (FRW) completes the Annual Reassessment, including all relevant FamilyNet screens.
3. **Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family.** The FRW sends the appropriate written notice which includes the relevant outline to the family at least 45 working days prior to the Annual Reassessment due date.
4. **Annual Reassessment Tasks.** Are completed by the FRW and include:
  - a review of the Foster/Adoptive Family Record, including the "Child Placement Agreement" for each child placed in the home since the initial License Study or last License Renewal Study;
  - input from each Social Worker who has or has had a child in the home during the preceding year using the "Social Worker's Observations" form;
  - updating the "Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Training Record", as necessary;
  - a review of the family's progress in completing the "Professional Development Plan" and planning for the upcoming year;
  - a visit to the home and meeting with at least the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) during which any changes are identified and signed release of information authorizations are obtained for any reference(s) to be sought;
  - background record checks on all household members age 14 years and older and on younger children (and children of any age in Department care or custody) about whom concerns exist;
  - required completion of the "Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes" form during the home visit; (see Appendix 3, "Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines")

- contacts with those references identified as necessary by the FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor;
  - review and assessment of the information received from interviews with household members;
  - no less than 15 working days prior to the due date of an Annual Reassessment in which potentially resolvable issues are identified that will prevent continued licensing, sending “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Issue Resolution Required Prior to License Continuation/Renewal” to the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s);
  - any additional activities determined by the FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor; and
  - identification of any family needs and a plan to address needs including follow-up and timeframes.
5. **Responsibility for Annual Reassessment Review/Decision.** The FRW, FR Supervisor and hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) complete review/decision regarding the Annual Reassessment outcome.
6. **Possible Outcomes.** Include:
- The kinship/child-specific family’s license is **continued** and the specific child(ren) the family may care for remains the same;
  - The kinship/child-specific family’s license is **continued** and the specific child(ren) the family may care for is changed;
  - The unrestricted family’s license is **continued** and the number, gender, age, and characteristics of children the family may care for remains the same;
  - The unrestricted family’s license is **continued** and the number, gender, age, and characteristics of children the family may care for is changed;
  - The unrestricted family’s license is **continued**, but the home’s status changes to “child-specific”;  
**OR**
  - The family’s license (any type) is **revoked**, the foster/pre-adoptive child(ren) is removed, and the home is closed. (See “Removal of Children from Foster Pre-Adoptive Homes” and “Closing of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes”)
7. **Notification of Annual Reassessment Outcome.** Within 10 working days after the date the Reassessment decision is made, the FRW notifies the family, in writing, using as appropriate:
- “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Family: Annual or Limited Reassessment Outcome—License Continued”,
  - “Notice to Unrestricted Family: Annual or Limited Reassessment Outcome—License Continued”,
  - “Notice to Unrestricted Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Continued/Renewed; Home Restricted”, **OR**
  - “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Revoked; Home Closing”.
8. **Related Annual Reassessment Activities.** The FRW:
- provides a copy of the Reassessment to family upon written request by the family;
  - arranges for the updated “Professional Development Plan” and related documents to be filed in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record;
  - shares the outcome with each Social Worker who has responsibility for a child in the home;
  - arranges for the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent Agreement and “Child Placement Agreement” to be updated/signed, copies given to the family, and the originals placed in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record; **and**
  - arranges for all documentation to be completed on FamilyNet.

9. **When Continued Licensing *NOT* Recommended and Child Resides in Home.** If continued licensing of the home is not recommended, the hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) verbally informs the placing Area Director.

The hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) and placing Area Director confer. If the Directors continue to disagree, the placing Area Director requests the approval of the Regional Director to continue the placement until the decision is made to continue/revoke the license. The Regional Director convenes a clinical review team for advice. If more than one region is involved, the hosting Regional Director convenes the clinical review. If no agreement is reached, the hosting Regional Director refers the matter to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations/designee. Within 10 working days after the recommendation not to continue the license, a final decision is made. If the outcome is that the license be revoked and the home closed, the child is removed following the procedures below. (See "Removal of Children from a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family")

### **Procedures: License Renewal Studies**

1. **Time Frames for Conducting License Renewal Studies.** The first License Renewal Study is due 12 months after the due date of the first Annual Reassessment; subsequent License Renewal Studies are due every 12 months after the intervening Annual Reassessment approval date (i.e., biannually). The License Renewal Study is due to the Supervisor 30 working days prior to due date.
2. **Responsibility for Conducting the License Renewal Study.** The FRW completes the License Renewal Study and the relevant FamilyNet screens.
3. **Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family.** The FRW sends the appropriate written notice which includes the relevant outline to the family at least 45 working days prior to the License Renewal Study due date.
4. **Tasks for the License Renewal Study.** Are completed by the FRW and include:
  - a review of the Foster/Adoptive Family Record, including the "Child Placement Agreement" for each child placed in the home since the last Annual Reassessment;
  - input from each Social Worker who has or has had a child in the home during the preceding year using the "Social Worker's Observations" form;
  - updating the "Foster/Adoptive Family Training Record", as necessary;
  - a review of the family's progress in completing the "Professional Development Plan" and planning for the upcoming year;
  - a visit to the home and meeting with at least the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) during which any changes are identified and signed release of information authorizations are obtained for any reference(s) to be sought;
  - background record checks on all household members age 14 years and older and on younger children (and children of any age in Department care or custody) about whom concerns exist;
  - required completion of the "Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes" form during the home visit; (see Appendix 3, "Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines")
  - obtaining and reviewing REQUIRED **school** references (1 written for each school age child living in the home and for each younger child who participates in a pre-school or child care program), AND the following references WHEN DETERMINED NECESSARY, in consultation with the Supervisor, due to the possible impact on the caretaker's ability to carry out the responsibilities of foster/pre-adoptive parent:
    - 1 written **employer** reference for each employed foster/pre-adoptive parent and 1 for head of household—if not a foster/pre-adoptive parent, whose employment status has changed since the last Annual Reassessment;
    - 1 written **medical** reference for each household member about whom concerns exist; and/or
    - other contacts as determined necessary;
  - review and assessment of the information received from interviews with all household members;

- no less than 15 working days prior to the due date of a License Renewal Study in which potentially resolvable issues are identified that will prevent license renewal, sending “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Issue Resolution Required Prior to License Continuation/Renewal”) to the foster/pre-parent(s);
  - any additional activities determined by the FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor; **and**
  - identification of any family needs and a plan to address those needs including follow-up and timeframes.
5. **Responsibility for License Renewal Study Review/Decision.** The FRW, FR Supervisor and hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) complete review/decision regarding the License Renewal Study outcome.
6. **Possible Outcomes.** Include:
- The kinship/child-specific family’s license is **renewed** for 2 years and the specific child(ren) the family may care for remains the same;
  - The kinship/child-specific family’s license is **renewed** for 2 years and the specific child(ren) the family may care for is changed;
  - The unrestricted family’s license is **renewed** for 2 years and the number, gender, age, and characteristics of children the family may care for remains the same;
  - The unrestricted family’s license is **renewed** for 2 years and the number, gender, age, and characteristics of children the family may care for is changed;
  - The unrestricted family’s license is **renewed**, but the home’s status changes to “child-specific”;  
**OR**
  - The family’s license (any type) is **revoked**, the foster/pre-adoptive child(ren) is removed, and the home is closed. (See “Removal of Children from Foster Pre-Adoptive Homes” and “Closing of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes”)
7. **Notification of License Renewal Study Outcome.** Within 10 working days after the date the License Renewal Study decision is made:
- if the license of a kinship/unrestricted family is **renewed**, the hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned) notifies the family, in writing, using “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Family: License Renewal Study Outcome—License Renewed”;
  - if the license of an unrestricted family is **renewed**, the hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned) notifies the family, in writing, using as appropriate:
    - “Notice to Unrestricted Family: License Renewal Study Outcome—License Renewed”, **or**
    - “Notice to Unrestricted Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Continued/Renewed; Home Restricted”; **OR**
  - if the license is **revoked**, the hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned) notifies the family, in writing, using “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Revoked; Home Closing.”
8. **Related License Renewal Study Activities.** The FRW:
- provides a copy of the Review/Reassessment to the family upon written request by the family;
  - arranges for the updated “Professional Development Plan” and related documents to be filed in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record;
  - shares the outcome with each Social Worker who has responsibility for a child in the home;
  - arranges for the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent Agreement and “Child Placement Agreement” to be updated/signed, copies given to the family, and the original placed in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record; **and**
  - arranges for all documentation to be completed on FamilyNet.

9. **When Continued or Renewed Licensing *NOT* Recommended and Child Resides in the Home.** If continued or renewed licensing of the home is not recommended, the hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) verbally informs the placing Area Director.

The hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) and placing Area Director confer. If the Directors continue to disagree, the placing Area Director requests the approval of the Regional Director to continue the placement until the decision is made to renew/revoke the license. The Regional Director convenes a clinical review team for advice. If more than one region is involved, the hosting Regional Director convenes the clinical review. If no agreement is reached, the hosting Regional Director refers the matter to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations/designee. Within 10 working days after the recommendation not to renew the license, a final decision is made. If the outcome is that the license be revoked and the home closed, the child is removed following the procedures below. (See "Removal of Children from a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family")

## LIMITED REASSESSMENTS

### Policy

#### Reason(s) for Conducting

A Limited Reassessment **is required**:

- if a 51A report is supported in which a foster/pre-adoptive parent or other household member is identified as responsible for the abuse or neglect;
- when the family is moving to a new residence;
- when the Department learns that corporal punishment has been used on a foster/pre-adoptive child placed in the home; AND
- when there is an emergency removal of a foster/pre-adoptive child from the home, as the result of a Department decision. *[NOTE: When a foster/pre-adoptive parent requests a child's emergency removal, the Family Resource Worker (FRW) interviews the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s), preferably as part of a home visit, to discuss the circumstances and to determine whether a Limited Reassessment should be conducted. (See "Removal of Children from Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes")]*

A Limited Reassessment **can be conducted**, with the approval of the Area Director/designee, when:

- there is a non-emergency removal of a foster/pre-adoptive child from the home;
- the family experiences a change such as addition of a new household member (other than placement of child in Department care/custody) or a new pet/animal; death, serious illness, or serious injury of a household member; separation or divorce of the foster/pre-adoptive parents; loss of employment by the foster/pre-adoptive parent or head of household; reduction of the foster/pre-adoptive family income; loss of a foster/pre-adoptive parent's qualified citizenship status; and any other change that affects the ability of the foster/pre-adoptive family to conform to Department standards;
- the foster/pre-adoptive family or the Department learns of a circumstance which would cause the Department to increase or decrease the maximum number of children who may be placed in the home;
- a 51A report is screened out or unsupported on the family or is supported on a child residing in the home by an individual who is not a household member; **OR**
- the Department learns of any possible violations of Department standards and/or the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent Agreement, or any circumstance which raises concern about the foster/pre-adoptive family's ability to maintain the safety or well-being of a children who may be placed in the home.

#### **Combined Limited Reassessment and Annual Reassessment or License Renewal Study**

Completion of a combined Limited Reassessment and Annual Reassessment or License Renewal Study may occur only when the following requirements are met:

The combined Limited Reassessment and Annual Reassessment/License Renewal Study is conducted within the 3 months preceding the Annual Reassessment/License Renewal Study due date.

The Supervisor gives prior approval to the plan to combine.

All requirements of the Annual Reassessment/License Renewal Study are met, and the Limited Reassessment is documented in FamilyNet as an Annual Reassessment or License Renewal Study (as applicable).

### Procedures for Limited Reassessments

1. **Notification of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family.** The FRW provides resource with the "Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Limited Reassessment" as soon as the decision to conduct a Limited Reassessment is made or at the time of the visit to the home.
2. **Limited Reassessment Tasks.** The FRW:
  - Completes a visit to the home and meeting with at least the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) and with household members as determined necessary in conjunction with the FR Supervisor;

- Obtains input from those Social Workers who have had a child placed in the home during or prior to the preceding year as determined by the FRW and her/his Supervisor, using the “Social Worker’s Observations” form;
- Requests background record checks on any new household members age 14 years and older and any other household member (including a child of any age who is in Department care/custody) about whom concerns exist as determined by the FRW, in consultation with the child’s Social Worker and her/his Supervisor;
- Completes a review of the home’s continuing ability to meet basic health and safety standards and completion of the “Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes” form (see Appendix 3, “Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines”) if:
  - a new household member [other than a child who is in Department care or custody] is residing in the home;
  - a reason for the Reassessment is a proposed increase in the maximum number of children residing in the home, **OR**
  - a significant change in the home has been identified;
- When a Limited Reassessment is being completed because of a supported 51B, contacts Department staff involved with the investigation;
- Contacts references, including persons other than those identified as references by the family, determined to be necessary by the FRW, in consultation with each child’s Social Worker and all Supervisors;
- Completes any additional activities determined to be necessary by the FRW, in consultation with her/his Supervisor; **and**
- Identifies any family needs and a plan to address those needs including follow-up and timeframes.

3. **Time Frames for Completion and Documentation of Limited Reassessment Decision.** The FRW completes the Limited Reassessment, including the written report, within 30 working days after the date she/he is informed of the decision to conduct it.

The FR Supervisor and hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned) review and approve the FRW’s report and recommendation.

4. **Possible Outcomes:**

- The kinship/child-specific family’s license is **continued** and the specific child(ren) the family may care for remains the same;
- The kinship/child-specific family’s license is **continued** and the specific child(ren) the home may care for is changed;
- The unrestricted family’s license is **continued** until the next Annual Reassessment/License Renewal Study—whichever is due (**or** when a merged Limited Reassessment and License Renewal Study occurs, the license is **renewed** for 2 years), **and** the number, gender, age, and characteristics of children the family may care for **remains the same**;
- The unrestricted family’s license is **continued** until next the Annual Reassessment/License Renewal Study—whichever is due (**or** when a merged Limited Reassessment and License Renewal Study occurs, the license is **renewed** for 2 years), **and** the number, gender age, or characteristics of children the family may care for **is changed**;
- The unrestricted family’s license is **continued**, but the home is being designated as “child-specific”; **OR**
- The family’s license (any type) is **revoked**, the foster/pre-adoptive child(ren) is removed, and the home is closed. (See “Removal of Children from Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes” and “Closing of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes”)

***The unrestricted home MUST BE CLOSED TO FUTURE PLACEMENTS immediately, when the foster/pre-adoptive parent is identified in the supported 51B investigation as the person alleged to be responsible for the abuse or neglect of a foster/pre-adoptive child.***

5. **Notification of Outcome.** Within 10 working days after the Limited Reassessment decision, the FRW notifies the family, in writing, using as appropriate:

- “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Family: Annual or Limited Reassessment Outcome—License Continued”;
- “Notice to Unrestricted Family: Annual or Limited Reassessment Outcome—License Continued”;
- “Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Family: License Renewal Study Outcome—License Renewed” (ONLY when Limited Reassessment and License Renewal Study are merged and license renewal is recommended);
- “Notice to Unrestricted Family: License Renewal Study Outcome—License Renewed” (ONLY when Limited Reassessment and License Renewal Study are merged and license renewal is recommended);
- “Notice to Unrestricted Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Continued/Renewed; Home Restricted” which includes information regarding fair hearing rights, **OR**
- “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Revoked; Home Closing” which includes information regarding fair hearing rights.

6. **Related Limited Reassessment Activities.** The FRW:

- Provides a copy of the Limited Reassessment to the family upon written request by the family.
- Files the Limited Reassessment and related documents in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record.
- Shares the outcome with each Social Worker who has responsibility for a child in the home.
- Reviews and updates as necessary the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent Agreement form and “Child Placement Agreement”.
- Arranges for all documentation to be completed on FamilyNet.

7. **When Continued (or Renewed) Licensing *NOT* Recommended and Child Resides in the Home.**

If continued or renewed licensing of the home is not recommended, the hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) verbally informs the placing Area Director.

The hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) and placing Area Director confer. If the Directors continue to disagree, the placing Area Director requests approval of the Regional Director to continue the placement until the decision is made to continue/renew or revoke the license. The Regional Director convenes a clinical review team for advice. If more than one region is involved, the hosting Regional Director convenes the clinical review team. If no agreement is reached, the hosting Regional Director refers the matter to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations/designee. Within 10 working days after the recommendation not to continue/renew license was made, a final decision is made. If the outcome is that the license be revoked and the home closed, the child is removed following the procedures below. (See “Removal of Children from a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family”)

## **REMOVAL OF CHILDREN FROM FOSTER/PRE-ADOPTIVE HOMES**

### **Policy for Removing Children from a Foster / Pre-Adoptive Family**

Removal of a child from a foster/pre-adoptive family is conducted in a thoughtful, planned manner that minimizes disruption to the child, the foster/pre-adoptive family, any other children placed in the setting and the child's biological family. Under most circumstances the foster/pre-adoptive family receives at least 14 calendar days written advance notice of the Department's intention to remove the child. If the foster/pre-adoptive family requests the child's removal, the family normally provides notice to the Department at least 14 calendar days prior to the date they are seeking for the child's removal. Preferably, the family confirms the removal request in writing.

Reasons for removal of a foster/pre-adoptive child include:

- a request from the foster/pre-adoptive family to have the child removed;
- a decision by the Department that a more suitable setting is needed to meet the child's needs for permanence, safety, and/or well-being;
- a supported 51B investigation in which a foster/pre-adoptive parent or other household member is identified as the person alleged to be responsible for the child abuse or neglect;
- the home's license is not being granted following completion of the initial License Study of a kinship/child-specific home which has been approved as an emergency placement or the home's license is being revoked following an Annual Reassessment, License Renewal Study or Limited Reassessment.

When the reason for the removal is that the foster/pre-adoptive home is being closed or restricted, the hosting Area Director informs the placing Area Director (if different) of the decision to close or restrict the foster/pre-adoptive family. If the placing Area Director determines that it would be in the child's best interests to remain in the home and after consultation the placing and hosting Area Directors continue to disagree, the matter is referred for a decision to the Regional Director who will convene a Regional clinical review team to advise her/him.

### **Policy Regarding Emergency Removals from Foster / Pre-Adoptive Families**

Emergency removal of a child who is in Department care or custody from the care of a foster/pre-adoptive family occurs in a planful way, and appropriate notice must be given to the foster/pre-adoptive parents. Emergency removal is used only when the Department has determined that the child is not safe in her/his current setting and is at immediate risk. The child's Supervisor **and** at least the Area Program Manager (APM) must approve the emergency removal. The emergency removal process is coordinated by the APM. The foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) must be directly notified of the removal through face-to-face—or, at least, direct—contact. Messages are not to be left on answering machines or with someone other than the foster/pre-adoptive parent. To maintain accurate information regarding the child's location on FamilyNet, the replacement of the child is entered in FamilyNet the same day it occurs.

Removal of a child from school (or other setting away from the foster/pre-adoptive home) on an emergency basis requires Area Director/designee approval and may occur only when the circumstances are such that removal from the home itself would present imminent risk of harm to the child and/or Department employee. If such an emergency removal is approved, the Area Director/designee is responsible for notifying the school principal (or, if a setting other than a school is involved, the director or other individual in charge of the setting). The foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) must be directly notified; if she/he cannot be located or if her/his whereabouts are unknown, the APM must contact the head of command in the local police department where the child has been residing.

### **Procedures for Removing Children from a Foster / Pre-Adoptive Family**

#### **Initiated by the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family**

1. **Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Requests Removal.** The foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) provides to the child's Social Worker at least 14 calendar days notice (which the child's Social Worker requests her/him to confirm in writing), except when immediate removal is necessary to maintain the life, health or emotional well-being of the child or household members.

The child's Social Worker arranges for the Family Resource Worker (FRW) to be informed of the request for the child's removal.

The child's Social Worker and the FRW interview the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s), the child, other household members, and any other individual deemed necessary (preferably during a home visit) to determine the reason(s) for the request and whether the situation can be resolved without removing the child. A referral for family-based services to stabilize the placement is considered.

- If the situation is **resolvable**, the child's Social Worker updates the Service Plan and the FRW updates the "Child Placement Agreement" to reflect any assistance to be provided.
  - If the situation is **not resolvable**, the child's Social Worker initiates arrangements to remove the child and notifies the foster/pre-adoptive family, in writing, using the "Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Child(ren) Being Removed" (copy to FRW) to confirm the removal and the actual or estimated removal date.
2. **No Fair Hearing Right.** When the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) requests a child's removal from her/his home, she/he has no right of appeal.
  3. **Informing Others.** The child's Social Worker and FRW jointly arrange for the following individuals to be informed of the child's placement change:
    - the biological parent(s) (unless she/he surrendered the child for adoption or a court of competent jurisdiction has terminated the parent's right to consent to the child's adoption),
    - school officials (except that the Area Director contacts the principal in the event of an emergency removal from the school),
    - police (the APM makes the contact in the event of an emergency removal in which the foster/pre-adoptive parent cannot be located or her/his whereabouts are unknown),
    - juvenile probation officers,
    - Department Attorney and
    - other appropriate individuals.

[See *Regulation 110 CMR 7.116 (1) (e)*]

4. **FamilyNet Documentation.** The FRW documents in the foster/pre-adoptive family's dictation the request for removal, the meeting, its outcome and the reason(s) for any decision to recommend completion of a Limited Reassessment.

### **In Order to Achieve a More Suitable Placement for Child's Permanence, Safety, and/or Well-Being**

1. **Possible Reasons for Removal.** The Department may determine that a child needs to be removed from a foster/pre-adoptive family and placed in a more suitable setting for a variety of reasons which include but are not limited to:
  - an alternative setting has been identified which better meets the child's individual needs, especially her/his need for permanency;
  - the family has not been or will not be able to meet the child's individual needs; or
  - the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) has failed to fulfill her/his responsibilities as specified in the Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent Agreement, the "Child Placement Agreement" and/or the Service Plan.
2. **Notice of Removal.** If the Department determines that a child needs to be removed in order to achieve a more suitable placement, the child's Social Worker notifies the foster/pre-adoptive family, in writing, using the "Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Child(ren) Being Removed" (copy to FRW).

This notice is provided at least 14 calendar days in advance of the removal, except under the following circumstances when the notice may be provided within less than 14 calendar days or at the time of the removal: **when the Area Director has determined that the child's physical, mental, or emotional well-being would be endangered by remaining in the foster/pre-adoptive home.**

The written notice includes:

- the Department's intention to remove the child;
  - the reason(s) for the removal;
  - the actual/estimated removal date;
  - if the removal is for placement with a prospective guardian or pre-adoptive parent, the foster/pre-adoptive family's right to and procedures for applying to become the guardian or pre-adoptive parent; and
  - the notice of right to dispute the decision, including description of different mechanisms available for review or appeal of this decision, and the information that any request for a fair hearing (if appeal rights apply—see Procedure 3, "Request for a Fair Hearing" below) must be submitted to the Department within 10 calendar days after the notice is received in order to prevent removal of the child pending the fair hearing.
3. **Request for a Fair Hearing.** If the foster/pre-adoptive family files a valid request for a fair hearing as follows, the foster/pre-adoptive child will not be removed until 10 calendar days after the issuance of the fair hearing decision, **except if the Area Director determines the child's physical, mental, or emotional well-being would be endangered by remaining in the home:**
- The family providing **foster care** has a right to request a fair hearing regarding the removal of the child, except in those situations when the child is being removed in order to be placed:
    - with her/his parent(s);
    - in a licensed pre-adoptive home, unless the foster parent(s) has applied to become the child's pre-adoptive home and the Department has not yet rejected her/his application;
    - with a legal guardian, unless the foster parent(s) has applied to become the legal guardian and the Department has not yet rejected her/his application;
    - in an independent living situation;
    - in a home where one or more of the child's siblings is residing;
    - in the licensed home of a kin of the foster child, if the current foster parent is not a kin of the foster child; **or**
    - in a different foster home, following completion of a full License Study of a kinship/child-specific home in which a child has been placed on an emergency basis, because the license is denied; or following completion of a Reassessment/License Renewal Study, because the foster parent's license is either being revoked or the unrestricted home's license is changing to "child-specific".
  - The family who has been identified as the child's **pre-adoptive placement** has a right to request a fair hearing regarding the child's removal, except in those situations when the child is being removed in order to be placed:
    - with her/his parents;
    - in an independent living situation; **or**
    - in a different foster/pre-adoptive home, following completion of a full License Study of a kinship/child-specific home in which a child has been placed on an emergency basis, because the license is denied; or following completion of a Reassessment/License Renewal Study, because the foster parent's license is either being revoked or the unrestricted home's license is changing to "child-specific".
4. **Informing Others.** The child's Social Worker and FRW jointly arrange for the following individuals to be informed of the child's placement change:

- the biological parent(s) (unless she/he surrendered the child for adoption or a court of competent jurisdiction has terminated the parent's right to consent to the child's adoption),
- school officials (except that the Area Director contacts the principal in the event of an emergency removal from the school),
- police (the APM makes the contact in the event of an emergency removal in which the foster/pre-adoptive parent cannot be located or her/his whereabouts are unknown),
- juvenile probation officers,
- Department Attorney and
- other appropriate individuals.

[See *Regulation 110 CMR 7.116 (2) (b)*]

### **Supported 51B in which a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent or Other Household Member is Identified as the Person Alleged to be Responsible for the Child Abuse/Neglect**

- 1. Removal Decision Following a Supported 51B.** Following a supported 51B investigation of a foster/pre-adoptive family, regardless of who is identified as the person alleged to be responsible for the child abuse or neglect, the Department determines ***whether the child's physical, mental, or emotional well-being would be endangered by remaining in the foster/pre-adoptive home. If yes, the child's Social Worker immediately removes the child on an emergency basis.***
  - *If a foster/pre-adoptive parent is identified as a person alleged to be responsible for a child's abuse and/or neglect:* the Department immediately suspends future placements to the home and conducts a Limited Reassessment to determine whether it is in the best interests of each child placed with the family to remain there. If the Department determines that a child should remain placed with the family, the home must be restricted (i.e., as "kinship" or "child-specific") for that child only.
  - If a household member other than a foster/pre-adoptive parent is named as a person alleged to be responsible for a child's abuse and/or neglect: the Department conducts a Limited Reassessment to determine:
    - whether it is in the best interests of each child placed with the family to remain there;
    - whether the home will be open to future placements; and
    - whether the home needs to be restricted (i.e., as "kinship" or "child-specific").
- 2. Notice of Removal, Fair Hearing Right.** If the Department determines that a child must be removed, the family and the assigned FRW are given verbal notice at the time of, or as soon as possible following, the removal, and the "Notice to Family Resource: Child(ren) Being Removed" is sent within 5 working days after the removal.

The written notice includes at least:

  - the reason(s) for the removal;
  - notice of the foster/pre-adoptive parent's right to dispute the removal decision and the procedures for requesting the appeal; and
  - notice that the Department intends to complete a Limited Reassessment of the foster/pre-adoptive family, including a review of the home's ability to meet basic health and safety requirements.
- 3. Informing Others.** The child's Social Worker and FRW jointly arrange for the following individuals to be informed of the child's placement change:
  - the biological parent(s) (unless she/he surrendered the child for adoption or a court of competent jurisdiction has terminated the parent's right to consent to the child's adoption),
  - school officials (except that the Area Director contacts the principal in the event of an emergency removal from the school),

- police (the APM makes the contact in the event of an emergency removal in which the foster/pre-adoptive parent cannot be located or her/his whereabouts are unknown),
- juvenile probation officers,
- Department Attorney and
- other appropriate individuals.

[See *Regulation 110 CMR 7.116 (2) (b)*]

### **When the Department Decides to Deny or Revoke a License and a Department Child Resides in the Home**

1. **Removal Decision When the Department Denies or Revokes a License and Child Resides in the Home.** If the Department decides to deny a license following completion of the initial License Study of a *kinship* or *child-specific* home in which a child's emergency placement has been approved, or to revoke a license following a Limited or Annual Reassessment or a License Renewal Study of any type of home, the FRW informs the child's Social Worker as soon as possible via telephone or email (child's Social Worker also receives a copy of the notice letter sent to the foster/pre-adoptive family regarding the license denial or revocation).
2. **Notice of Removal, No Fair Hearing Right.** The child's Social Worker notifies the foster/adoptive family, in writing, using "Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Child(ren) Being Removed" (copy to FRW). This notice is provided at least 14 calendar days in advance of the removal, except under the following circumstances when the notice may be provided within less than 14 calendar days or at the time of the removal: ***when the Area Director has determined that the child's physical, mental, or emotional well-being would be endangered by remaining in the foster/pre-adoptive home.***

The written notice includes the reason(s) for the removal; the family does not have the right to appeal the removal [the family receives from the FRW notice of their right to appeal the license denial or revocation].

3. **Informing Others.** The child's Social Worker and FRW jointly arrange for the following individuals to be informed of the child's placement change:
  - the biological parent(s) (unless she/he surrendered the child for adoption or a court of competent jurisdiction has terminated the parent's right to consent to the child's adoption),
  - school officials (except that the Area Director contacts the principal in the event of an emergency removal from the school),
  - police (the APM makes the contact in the event of an emergency removal in which the foster/pre-adoptive parent cannot be located or her/his whereabouts are unknown),
  - juvenile probation officers,
  - Department Attorney and
  - other appropriate individuals.

[See *Regulation 110 CMR 7.116 (2) (b)*]

## **CLOSING FOSTER / PRE-ADOPTIVE HOMES**

### **Policy for Closing a Foster / Pre-Adoptive Home**

The decision to close a foster/pre-adoptive home is conducted in a thoughtful, planned manner that minimizes disruption to the child and the foster/pre-adoptive family. While linked to the decision to remove a child from a foster/pre-adoptive home, the decision to close the home is separate and may be arrived at before or after the decision to remove. Although decisions to remove a child from or suspend placements in a home may need to be made on an emergency or immediate basis, the decision to close the home results from a reflective, coordinated process involving Department staff assigned to the child and to the foster/pre-adoptive family as well as the family itself. The decision requires the approval of at least the Family Resource Supervisor and the hosting Area Director/designee or hosting Regional Director/designee (as assigned). Prior to closing the home, all children who are in Department care or custody must be removed. When a foster/pre-adoptive home is closed, its license is revoked. To be licensed again after being closed, the family must complete a new "Family Resource Application", and a new License Study must be completed.

Circumstances which **require** that a foster/pre-adoptive home be closed include:

- when the outcome of a full License Study is a recommendation not to license the kinship/child-specific home in which a child was placed on an emergency basis;
- when the outcome of a Limited Reassessment, Annual Reassessment or License Renewal Study is a recommendation to revoke the foster/pre-adoptive family's license.

Circumstances which result in the closing of a foster/pre-adoptive home, unless the Department is able to resolve them, include:

- the foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) requests that the home be closed;
- the kinship/child-specific foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) requests removal of the child placed with them.

Once a foster/pre-adoptive home has been closed, the family must complete a new "Family Resource Application" and License Study, in order to be licensed again to provide foster/pre-adoptive care.

### **Procedures for Closing a Foster / Pre-Adoptive Home**

1. **Closing Initiated by Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family.** The foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) requests that the home be closed, in writing.

The Family Resource Worker (FRW) meets with the foster/pre-adoptive family to discuss:

- the reason(s) for closing the home,
- plans for the removal of each child placed in the home, and
- the date for each child's removal.

2. **Closing Initiated by the Department.** When the closing is an outcome of the decision to deny a license following completion of an initial License Study of a **kinship/child-specific** foster/pre-adoptive home in which a child has been placed on an emergency basis or the decision to revoke a license following an Annual or Limited Reassessment or a License Renewal Study, the FRW determines the date of closing and discusses reasons and plans for the child's removal with the foster/pre-adoptive family.

3. **Notice of Closing.** Within 3 working days after the decision to close the home is made, the FRW sends the appropriate notice to the foster/pre-adoptive family with a copy to each child's Social Worker as follows:

- **Initiated by the Family:** "Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Confirmation of Family's Decision to Close Home".
- **Initiated by the Department:**
  - "Notice to Notice to Kinship/Child-Specific Applicant: License Denied" or

- “Notice to Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family: Annual/Limited Reassessment or License Renewal Study Outcome—License Revoked; Home Closing”, as applicable.
4. **Closing Summary.** The FRW completes a closing summary for inclusion in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record which includes:
    - the foster/pre-adoptive family’s length of service,
    - a brief description of the Department’s experience in using the home, and
    - the date and reason(s) for closing.
  5. **FamilyNet Documentation.** The FRW updates the FamilyNet Resource Directory to close the home and terminates the license.

## WHEN REMOVAL OR CLOSING DECISIONS INVOLVE 2 DEPARTMENT OFFICES

### Procedures

1. **Decision-Making Procedure.** In those situations in which a child is being removed from a foster/pre-adoptive home which is being closed or restricted, or is having its license revoked, the hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) verbally informs the placing Area Director of the need to have the child removed from the home.
  - The hosting Area Director or hosting Regional Director (as assigned) and the placing Area Director confer. If the Directors continue to disagree, the placing Area Director refers the matter to the Regional Director who convenes a clinical review team to advise her/him. If more than one Regional Director is involved and they disagree, the hosting Regional Director convenes the clinical review team.
  - If no agreement is reached, the hosting Regional Director refers the matter to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations/designee.
  - Within 10 working days after the recommendation was made to close, restrict or revoke the license of the home, a final decision is made. If the decision is that the home be closed, restricted or have its license revoked, the child is removed according to the above procedures, “Removal of Children from Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes.”
2. **License Status.** If a decision is made to leave a child with the family, the home remains licensed; however, an unrestricted home may become a restricted “child-specific” home for placement of that child only.

The home continues to be the responsibility of the Area Office covering the geographic location of the family.

## RE-OPENING OF A CLOSED FOSTER/PRE-ADOPTIVE HOME

### Procedures

1. **Family Seeks to Re-Open within 6 Months after Home Closed.** When a foster/pre-adoptive family indicates that it wants to resume provision of foster/pre-adoptive care within 6 months after it closed, the Department affirms that the home continues to meet the requirements for licensure by completing an Annual Reassessment or License Renewal Study—whichever was due next.
2. **Family Seeks to Re-Open 6 Months or Longer after Home Closed.** When a foster/pre-adoptive family indicates that it wants to resume provision of foster/pre-adoptive care 6 months or longer after the date it closed, the Department completes a new License Study to determine that the family meets the requirements to be licensed as a foster/pre-adoptive family.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Waivers of Pre-Licensing Training for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**

#### **Policy**

All prospective foster/pre-adoptive applicants must successfully complete the Department-approved pre-licensing education, support, and training program specified for the type of licensing they are seeking. If a couple is applying, both are required to be trained. An exception to the completion of the program may occur only under the following circumstances:

- **previous experience**, i.e., when the applicant(s) presents documentation of training and experience in partnership-oriented foster care/adoption that is comparable to the philosophy and practice within the Department; or
- **factors affecting participation**, i.e., when the applicant(s) presents an acceptable reason for being unable to attend, along with a plan for obtaining experience equivalent to the Department-approved program.

#### **Procedures**

1. **Waivers of Participation in the Department-Approved Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Pre-Licensing Training Program: Due to Previous Participation.** If a prospective foster/pre-adoptive family has documented participation in other training programs or has experience in providing foster/pre-adoptive care with another partnership-oriented agency, the requirement to participate may be waived through the development and approval of a waiver request. The Family Resource Worker (FRW) works with the family to develop the waiver request and forwards it for approval to her/his Supervisor and the hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee, as assigned.

The waiver request includes:

- a cover memo summarizing the reason for the waiver request, and any work done by the FRW submitting the request to determine its appropriateness;
- an outline of the training curriculum used by the agency with whom the applicant(s) was/is affiliated;
- a copy of the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family's original License Study and copies of any completed Reassessments/License Renewal Studies or comparable documents from another partnership-oriented agency; and
- documentation of the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family's placement and training experience.

The hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) determines:

- whether the preparation is comparable;
- whether it is sufficiently recent;
- whether any intervening changes in family circumstances warrant additional preparation; and
- whether the applicant's previous foster/adoptive parenting experience is relevant to current Department policies and practices.

The hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) informs the FRW of her/his decision, including any conditions, in writing. The FRW notifies the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family of the outcome in writing and ensures that a copy of the decision notification is maintained in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record.

2. **Waivers of Participation in the Department-Approved Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Pre-Licensing Training Program: Due to Factors Affecting Participation.** If a prospective foster/pre-adoptive family is unable/unavailable to participate in the Department's pre-approved pre-licensing training program for reasons relating to such matters as health, employment or family responsibilities, the requirement to participate may be waived through the development and approval of a waiver request. The FRW works with the family to develop the waiver request and forwards it for approval to her/his Supervisor and the hosting Area Director/designee or the Regional Director/designee, as assigned.

*NOTE: In 2 parent households, both parents are required to attend the pre-licensing training program together.*

The waiver request includes:

- the reason(s) and any appropriate documentation as to why the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family (perhaps one of a couple) is unable to participate in the Department-approved pre-licensing training program (defined for licensing as an unrestricted family, for example, as attending all but one session; in 2 parent households, one or both parents can miss one session);
- an indication of the alternative pre-licensing training programs which have been considered but found to be unworkable and why;
- documentation that the motivation to serve as a foster/pre-adoptive family has been explored and the impact of health, employment and/or family issues has been considered by the FRW;
- a plan whereby the prospective foster/pre-adoptive applicant(s) who is unable to participate shares responsibility for becoming familiar with the training program material, e.g., through meetings with and provision of information by the FRW, use of video or audio-tapes made by or obtained from the Department, completion of a self-training or alternative program and/or expected participation in a later Department-approved training program should this become available in the future.

The hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) reviews the request and makes the waiver decision based on its merits and on maintaining the integrity of Department requirements for successful completion of the pre-licensing education, support, and training program for foster/pre-adoptive family licensing.

The hosting Area Director/designee or Regional Director/designee (as assigned) informs the FRW of her/his decision, including any conditions, in writing. The FRW notifies the prospective foster/pre-adoptive family of the outcome in writing and ensures that a copy of the decision notification is maintained in the Foster/Adoptive Family Record.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family License Study Guide**

- I. INTRODUCTION**
- II. FAMILY BACKGROUND**
- III. PERSONAL HISTORY**
- IV. SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORK**
- V. PARENTING EXPERIENCE AND ATTITUDES**
- VI. ATTITUDES TOWARD BIRTH PARENTS, FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION**
- VII. MOTIVATION AND FERTILITY**
- VIII. REFERENCES AND MEDICAL / MENTAL HEALTH HISTORY**
- IX. TRAINING SUMMARY**
- X. CHILD INTEREST CHARACTERISTICS**
- XI. LICENSE STUDY SUMMARY / RECOMMENDATIONS**
- XII. LICENSE STUDY UPDATE**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Describe how the family became involved with the Department. Why did they decide to pursue adoption/foster/kinship care through the Department rather than another resource? Are they pursuing a homestudy at more than one agency?
2. Describe how the family presented initially. For example, describe affect during individual/couple interviews. Describe their ability to relate and their affect and style of participation during the License Study process. What was observed about their behavior. In the case of a kinship or child-specific License Study, describe their ability to relate to the Family Resource Worker during the License Study process.
3. Give a brief physical description of the applicant(s). Describe height, weight, age, hair color, eye color, skin tone, and overall physical presentation.
4. Describe the family residence, neighborhood and community. Include the length of time the family has lived in the home, bedroom accommodations for household members and for the child(ren) to be placed. Indicate whether the sewerage system is public or private. Describe any safety concern(s) (e.g., re: pets/animals, pools, neighborhood) and the plan(s) developed to address them. If firearms are kept in the home, indicate the purpose(s) for which they are kept and describe how the applicant(s) meet Department firearm safety requirements. Indicate whether any member(s) of the household smokes cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Describe the social and cultural aspects of the neighborhood and community. (See Appendix 3, "Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines")
5. Indicate compliance with Department of Early Education and Care/Department regulations and Department policy for physical and safety requirements. (Refer to "Physical Requirements for Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes" checklist and Appendix 3, "Enhanced Safety Assessment Guidelines".)

#### **II. FAMILY BACKGROUND**

1. Describe the composition of each applicant's family of origin. State the number and ages of siblings and relationship to them. State the current ages of each applicant's parents. If deceased, state the date and cause of death. In addition, was there any other person who had a significant role within the family composition? Are there sections of the applicant's background that she/he cannot remember?

2. Describe each applicant's relationship with each of her/his parents. Describe the personalities of each applicant's parents, as the applicant perceived them, i.e., what were her/his mother and father like? Was one parent more dominant than the other was? Was one parent more involved with the children than the other? What was the applicant's relationship with each parent? Give examples that would demonstrate that relationship. Describe how insightful, attuned or responsive each applicant felt her/his parents were to her/his needs. Did the applicant's parents experience parenting as a gratifying experience? Give examples.

What is the current relationship with the parents? How often are they in contact with them? By phone? Visiting? What was the applicant's father's and/or mother's employment? Was either parent at home with the children? If the parent was away from home during times when the children would ordinarily be there, what kind of arrangements were made for their supervision?

3. Describe each applicant's relationship with her/his siblings. What were their relationships like as children? Give examples. Were they closer to one sibling than another? Did the parents favor one child over the others? What roles did the applicant and her/his siblings take on in the family? What were the applicant's feelings about being in that role?

Was the applicant ever required to care for younger siblings? What were the applicant's experiences in that role? Has this experience colored, in any way, the applicant's perspective of, or interest in, parenting? What is the applicant's current relationship with her/his siblings? Are the siblings married? Do they have children? Where do the siblings currently reside?

4. Describe the parenting and discipline styles that operated in the applicant's family. As children, were the applicants included in family decision-making? What did their parents expect of them? Did they fulfill their parents' expectations? Were there family secrets, and if so, how did the applicant find out? Was the applicant or any of the applicant's siblings a parentified child? How were children's questions handled by the parents in the home? How would the applicant characterize her/his experience living in this family?

Describe who was responsible for the discipline in the family. How were the children disciplined? Give examples. Considering all of the above, what would the applicant have done the same or differently?

5. Describe the family's cultural and ethnic origins. Was the applicant or applicant's parents born in the United States or another country? If anyone was from another country, what was the effect of immigration on the family? How did the children adapt? What languages are spoken at home and out of the home? How is adoption perceived by this culture? How is foster care perceived? What are the expectations, in this culture, when parents are unable to care for their children? Does the family know of the applicant's interest in adoption, foster care, or kinship, and are they supportive of this?
6. Describe the values in each applicant's family of origin in terms of work ethics, education and community support. How important were education, work, and community involvement in this family? Did anyone in their family become involved with or make commitments to community activities? Indicate relationships with extended family members and identify support systems.

### III. PERSONAL HISTORY

1. What does each applicant think were her/his significant life events, as a child, as an adolescent, and as an adult? Describe the applicant's pleasant and rewarding memories of growing up in her/his family. Were there any traumas that the applicant remembers experiencing? Did the applicant suffer from any mental health problems? When did they occur? Was any adult available to help? Was any outside help sought? Was the help successful? Describe. Are there reports available for Department review? If so, what do they indicate?

Has the applicant ever been a victim of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence? If yes, refer to the *Policy #85-011, Assessment Policy*, Appendix D, "Domestic Violence Protocol". Describe the circumstances, the age of the applicant, and the length of time over which the trauma occurred. Did the applicant's family have any prior involvement with the Department or its predecessors? Did the applicant ever receive any counseling or therapy for this or any other experience? If so, when, and over what period of time? Was it successful? Describe. What is the applicant's present understanding about how and why these events occurred? If the parents were the source of the abuse or neglect, or were unable to protect the applicant from the abuse or neglect, has the applicant discussed her/his

feelings with them? Does the applicant have any insight, as an adult, into her/his parent's behavior? Is the applicant able to express any compassion for them? Any forgiveness? How does the applicant think that this experience has affected her/his relationships with her/his parents or with other people? If this is the way the applicant has been parented, to what extent has this experience impacted on the applicant's role as a parent, or the applicant's perception of him/herself as a parent?

Is there a history of alcohol or substance abuse in the family? If yes, refer to *Policy #85-011, Assessment Policy*, Appendix D, "Substance Abuse Protocol". Is there a history of mental illness, anxiety, or depression in the family? Is there a history of physical or sexual abuse in the family? Was the applicant victimized or witness to any kind of abusive situation in the family? Were there firearms in the household? If any of the aforementioned situations existed, please describe the applicant's feelings about experiencing that situation, how she/he coped as a child and the effect it has had on the applicant's life style currently. Please describe any treatment the applicant may have received as a result of any of these experiences and if the treatment was completed or effective.

Has the applicant ever abused alcohol or controlled substances? If yes, refer to *Policy #85-011, Assessment Policy*, Appendix D, "Substance Abuse Protocol". If so, beginning when and over what period of time? What is the applicant's understanding as to why or how this began? How did the applicant cope during this time? Did the applicant seek help? What type of help/treatment was sought? How effective was the treatment? Were there any relapses? Where is the applicant now with regard to her/his recovery program? Can we obtain a report from the treatment source? How has this impacted on the applicant's perception of herself/himself?

2. Were there any geographical moves, other transitions or losses of significant people in the applicant's life? If moves occurred, how were those moves explained to the children? What does the applicant remember about how those changes felt? What was it like moving into a new school, a new community, making new friends? Was there any support offered by anyone in the family around those changes/losses.

Was the family intact? Were there losses of immediate or extended family or close friends when the applicant was a child? If so, how were these losses handled with the applicant by her/his parents? (Role modeling.) What was the applicant told? Did the applicant have any questions which were not answered? What feelings does the applicant remember about those losses, and how did the applicant manage those feelings?

3. How does each applicant currently describe her/his own character and personality? How does the applicant describe her/his style of relating and of communicating? What does the applicant expect from ongoing relationships with family and friends? What does the applicant see as her/his strengths and areas which might need improvement?

What kinds of insights does the applicant have about her/his own family of origin? Is the applicant able to identify strengths and limitations in her/his family of origin? Is the applicant forgiving and/or compassionate about family members' shortcomings.

4. Describe each applicant's educational history, school experiences, military and career experiences. How was schooling regarded by the applicant's family? What kinds of experiences did the applicant have in elementary and high school, academically and socially? What kinds of peer relationships and/or childhood friends did the applicant have? Was there any particularly significant relationship? What was the highest academic level achieved?

If the applicant went on for advanced education, what were the motivating factors and what was the applicant's area of major interest? What degree(s) were achieved? Is the applicant currently involved in pursuing educational or career goals and would this impact on a placement? Were there other personal or professional achievements of significance? Did the applicant have any military service? Describe.

Describe the applicant's employment history. What types of employment were sought and for what reasons? Which positions did the applicant find the most gratifying and which the least?

5. Describe each applicant's current work situation. In what type of employment is each engaged and for what period of time? What is the current salary? How well does the applicant like this position? Does the applicant have future career interests which she/he plans to pursue?

6. Describe each applicant's financial stability, answering all questions below. In the past has the family had a stable source of income sufficient for all household members? In the future is the family expected to have a stable source of income sufficient for current household members? Please NOTE: For applicants who receive T-AFDC, does the family have an approved plan for meeting income needs in the future?

Does the applicant understand that foster care payments and adoption subsidy may be available? To what extent will the applicants be dependent upon Department monies to support a child placed with them? If applying for foster care, does the family understand that foster care monies are intended for reimbursement for the care of the child? How would the family sustain themselves financially if foster care payments were delayed?

7. What are each applicant's interests, hobbies, affiliations with personal, community and professional organizations? Over what period of time have these hobbies or interests been pursued? What prompted participation in these activities? Are these hobbies or interests shared with a significant other, or are they the applicant's own interests?
8. Describe each applicant's religious affiliation and how significant religion is in the applicant's life. Does the applicant have a religious affiliation? How significant is religion in the applicant's life? Is the applicant's religious affiliation the same as the one in which she/he was raised? If it is not, why, and when did the applicant decide to change? What is the applicant's expectation for religious affiliation of a child placed with his or her family? How important is it to the applicant that a child participate in the applicant's religion or attend religious services regularly? How would the applicant feel about a child placed in her/his home who was of a different religion? How would the applicant feel about helping such a child continue her/his religious practices?

#### **IV. SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORK**

1. State the dates of previous marriages and of significant relationships and an understanding of why they dissolved. Indicate if a marriage terminated as a result of divorce. Give examples of what the applicant feels went wrong in the marriage or relationship, efforts that were made to cope with or resolve those problems and why the applicant feels those efforts were not successful.

Indicate if marriage or relationship terminated as a result of death. Describe the cause of death and the date. Describe how the applicant coped with the loss. Was either applicant in one or more previously abusive relationships? If yes, please refer to *Policy #85-011, Assessment Policy*, Appendix C, "Domestic Violence Protocol".

2. State date and place of current marriage or significant relationship. How did they meet? What attracted them to one another? How long did they know each other before they decided to marry or live together? If there was a previously failed relationship, how is the applicant's current marital situation or relationship different from the one that was not successful?
3. Describe the qualities they admire most about each other and least about each other. What does the couple like and dislike most about each other and why? Are they respectful and/or tolerant of the likes and dislikes between them? What are their values as a couple? What does the couple do socially or for entertainment? What are their relationships with friends, neighbors, and community in general, like?
4. Describe the style of communication with each other and within the family. Does one partner feel she/he does more of the listening or talking than the other does? How comfortable does each feel with this style? Describe what they feel works best in their relationship as well as what they feel needs more work.
5. Describe how within the marriage or relationship each applicant copes with stress, with differences of opinion, with challenges, with decision-making.

What is the power and control structure within the marriage or relationship? How are decisions made within the relationship? How are disagreements and conflicts resolved? Who initiates resolutions? Include the degree of acceptance, tolerance, comfort, or resignation which appears. State whether the information was obtained in individual or joint interviews. Has either partner ever experienced intimidation in the current relationship or prevented the other from doing things she/he would like to do (e.g., going to work, out with friends)? If yes, see *Policy #85-011, Assessment Policy*, "Domestic

Violence Protocol". Have any conflicts resulted in a separation? In counseling? In a restraining order being issued?

6. Describe gay and lesbian couples' experiences in introducing their relationships to their families and the community. When did they first acknowledge their sexual orientation? Whom did they tell first? How was the information received? How have their families and the community received them as a couple? How have they coped with people who are not comfortable with their relationship? How will they help a child cope? How will they explain to the child why she/he has 2 mothers or 2 fathers?
7. Describe each applicant's current relationship with any children from a previous marriage or relationship. Where and with whom do the children reside? Who has custody of these children? What type of contact, if any, does the applicant have and is the frequency and type of contact satisfactory to the applicant? What explanation was offered to the children about the dissolution of their parents' marriage? At what point in the decision making process were the children informed? What was said and by whom? How did the children respond? What were the reasons for the custody decision? Is the applicant comfortable with those reasons?
8. Other than the applicant's(s') child(ren), describe other individuals who reside in the home. List each individual's age, sex, and relationship to the applicant(s). Describe the individual's role in the household, how long she/he has been residing there, and how long it is anticipated she/he will continue to reside there. Describe the circumstances under which this individual came to reside in the applicant's home. Describe any physical or emotional health issues or past or current concerns regarding this individual's routine functioning. Describe the extent to which these individuals will be interacting with a child placed in this home. Describe the degree to which these individuals will have caretaking responsibility for a child placed in the home. Is there anyone in the home whose use of alcohol or drugs is of concern? Please refer to *Policy #85-011, Assessment Policy*, "Substance Abuse Protocol". If this is a kinship placement, are the above household members in support of the Department's goals for the child(ren)?
9. Describe other individuals who frequently visit the home. List their age, sex, and relationship to the applicant(s). Describe the individual's role in the household, the frequency, length and reason for visits, physical and emotional health, or any other past or current concern regarding this individual's routine functioning. Describe the degree to which these individuals will have caretaking responsibility for a child placed in the home. For kinship families, are the parent(s) of the child to be placed among the frequent visitors to the home? If so, have issues such as limit-setting with the child's parents, safety and supervision been addressed with the child's social worker. Describe.
10. Describe the extent to which extended family has been or will be prepared regarding a foster or pre-adoptive child living in the home. How will the applicant and the applicant's family members ensure that a new child will feel comfortable in their home? How will the applicant(s) explain a foster child's temporary status with the family? How will the applicant(s) explain the situation with regard to the child's birth family which necessitated placement? How will the applicant address the issue of what the foster child will call him/her? Who will supervise the child when the applicant is not available? How will the applicant(s) prepare themselves and their family for the child's departure?  
  
*If a pre-adoptive placement, describe the extent to which extended family members have been included in, and informed of, the applicant's(s') interest in adoption. Describe their feelings and reactions to this information. What are extended family member feelings about having this child become a full-fledged member of their family? Is there any part of the adoption process that is of concern to the extended family, e.g., the likelihood that the child may "inherit undesirable traits" of her/his birth parents? What are their feelings about giving the family name to such a child?*
11. Describe the support system that each applicant believes is available to her/him. Describe the personal support system as well as the parenting support system. Are there some individuals available whom the applicant would turn to first for support in personal and parenting issues, and if so, who are they? Have these people agreed to take on such a role?
12. Describe the arrangements which will be made to care for a child placed with the applicant when the applicant is not available. What kind of child care arrangements will be made if both applicants need to be at work? What criteria will the applicant(s) be looking for in choosing an alternative caretaker? (Refer to *Policy #86-014, Background Records Check Policy*.) What kinds of discipline will be expected from the caretaker? In a foster/pre-adoptive, kinship/child-specific/unrestricted placement,

how much of the child's background or history will the applicant(s) want to share with the caretaker?  
At any time do the applicant(s) intend to allow older children in the home to care for the child placed?  
If so, for what period of time and under what circumstances?

## V. PARENTING EXPERIENCE AND ATTITUDES

1. Has the applicant had parenting experience? If yes, describe. If the applicant has parented or been responsible for children *other than his or her own*, describe that parenting experience, including the nature of the relationship. How was it decided that the applicant would provide parenting for this child or children? Is there a current relationship with this child or children? If so what is it? What were the rewards or challenges experienced? How has this experience affected the way in which the applicant parents children now and in the future?
2. Describe each of the applicant's children in terms of physical presentation, individual personality traits, relationships with her/his parents, siblings and peers. Describe each child. Describe specific characteristics of each child's personality. State the composition of the applicant(s) current family. Include the number and ages of the children in the family, whether they are members of the family by birth, adoption, foster care, or a blended family, and whether they reside in the home or else where.

Describe school reports and whether the child is at grade level in academic performance and social skills as perceived by the school and the family. Include any outside interests or activities in which the child may engage. Does any child have a history of, or current medical problem, mental health problem, developmental problem, educational problem, behavioral problem, or substance abuse problem? If yes, has treatment been sought, over what period of time and how effective has treatment been?

Describe each parent's relationship to each child and what is unique about that relationship.

For children already placed, adopted, etc., describe the circumstances and/or events which led up to the placement of each child (pre-adoptive/foster, kinship/child-specific/unrestricted). For pre-adoptive families, describe the family background information the applicant(s) has for each pre-adoptive child, their feelings about that, and their degree of comfort and success in sharing that information with the child.

3. Describe the extent to which each child has been or will be prepared for the arrival of a new child to the home. Whether foster/pre-adoptive kinship/child-specific/unrestricted, describe the extent to which each child has been prepared for the arrival of a new child and her/his feelings about that arrival. Describe how the applicant(s) have explained the placement process to the children already in the family. How were birth parents explained? What was their child(ren)'s reaction to this information? How do the applicant(s) plan to deal with sibling rivalry?

With regard to foster care/kinship, how have the applicant(s) explained the child's separation from her/his family? How have they explained the temporary nature of the placement and that the plan for the child is to be reunited with his family? Is the applicant aware of her/his child's anxiety about children coming and going in the family? How has this been addressed? How would the applicant(s) cope with jealousy between the foster child and the applicant(s) child(ren)? If it is a kinship placement how will the applicant explain why a relative is now living in their home. How will the applicant(s) help their children understand that the relative(s) parent(s) may have restrictions re: the contact with their children?

4. How does each applicant describe her/his parenting style? How do they communicate with children? What techniques do they feel are effective and which are not effective?

Describe what difficulties they think they may have in parenting, and how they would like to try to avoid those difficulties. What do they anticipate would be their absolute limit in what they could tolerate in a child's behavior and how would they prepare for that? What would be the worst behavior they could imagine a child exhibiting? If that occurred, what would they do?

What are the household rules and expectations? Which rules may not be broken and which may be broken on occasion?

5. Describe what each applicant feels is/will be the most gratifying part of parenting.

6. Describe what each applicant feels is/will be the most difficult or challenging part of parenting. What supports will they be planning to put in place in order to cope with those challenges more easily?
7. Describe each applicant's disciplinary techniques. Give examples of how each applicant would respond to specific behaviors exhibited by our children, such as: tantrums, swearing, aggressiveness, assaultiveness, manipulating, etc. What techniques would they use?

Does the applicant's cultural heritage support a particular style of disciplining? How comfortable is the applicant with that particular style? Describe whom they feel should discipline a child and under what circumstances? Give examples of when they feel punishment should be used and indicate if there are any times when they feel that spanking is appropriate.

8. Describe what each applicant sees as the difference between punishment and discipline. Give examples of when they would employ each. Does the applicant use a system of rewards as a means of discipline? What types of rewards are employed? How aware are they of the Department's position on physical punishment? How able are they to relinquish their position on physical punishment if they feel it is suitable under certain circumstances?
9. Describe how each applicant communicates with children. Are they aware of communicating verbally as well as non-verbally? Can they give examples of non-verbal communication? What experiences have they had talking to children or helping children feel more comfortable about doing something they do not want to do? With what age children are they most familiar?
10. If the applicant is a single parent, what is her/his description of any particular rewards and challenges of parenting alone, and how he/she anticipates these will impact her/his ability to also parent a foster/pre-adoptive child? What are the applicant's reasons for choosing to parent alone? What does the applicant see as the role of the mother to a child and the role of a father to a child? In what way will the applicant attempt to compensate for the "absent" parent? How does the applicant plan to explain the absence of the other parent to the child? Who does the applicant feel can be available to occasionally step into the other role? Who will be able to step in at a moment's notice and care for the child?

What has been the most challenging part of parenting alone? How has the absence of the father or mother been explained to the child? Does the applicant plan to be in a relationship at any time in the future? What would the applicant do to prepare the child for such a relationship? What would the applicant do if the applicant's being in a relationship were counter-productive or intolerable to the child?

## **VI. ATTITUDES TOWARD BIRTH PARENTS, FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION**

1. Describe each applicant's understanding of the need to remove the child(ren) from the parent's(s') home, including her/his acknowledgment and agreement that a problem exists that warrants intervention by the Department. What is the applicant's understanding of the types of situations, which warrant such removal? If kinship care, what is the applicant's understanding of her/his relatives' situation? How does the applicant feel about her/his role as a resource for the Department? How does the applicant intend to fulfill her/his responsibility to the Department and still maintain her/his relationship with her/his family? What are the applicant's feelings about physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect? What is the applicant's understanding of how and why the parents of these children find themselves in such situations? What is the applicant's opinion of the parents of these children? What is the applicant's understanding of the children's reaction to such a removal and what the applicant is likely to encounter in terms of behavior in her/his home?
2. Describe the level of compassion and empathy each applicant demonstrates with regard to birth parents, their situations, and their resulting effects on the child. What are the applicant's views towards the inability or unwillingness of the birth parents to parent? Does she/he understand the impact on the child of her/his attitudes toward birth parents?

Describe the applicant's feelings, ideas and degree of comfort in talking to a child about his foster/pre-adoptive/adoptive status, her/his history, and her/his birth parents. What information do they think a child would want to know about her/his background? How would they answer the child's questions? How do they think a child will feel to hear information about her/his birth parents?

Describe the applicant's ability to anticipate, acknowledge, and identify areas that she/he continues to feel anxious about or uncomfortable about and what assistance she/he may continue to need.

Is the applicant an adoptee or former foster child? If an adoptee or foster child, what does the applicant know about her/his history? Given this past experience, what, if anything, would the applicant have liked to have been handled differently? Has the applicant ever searched for her/his birth parents? Describe.

3. Describe the extent to which each applicant feels prepared to discuss with the child(ren) the birth parent's difficult history of physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, or neglect. Give examples that indicate where each applicant is in regard to thinking through her/his feelings about adopting a child from such a background and helping the child understand that background. Do they want to answer all the child's questions? Do they want to tell the child the truth about everything? Are there any issues they would prefer not to discuss with a child?
4. Describe each applicant's ability to work in partnership with parents and the Department toward the goals of the Service Plan, including her/his understanding for any limit-setting with the children's parents or extended family. Do foster parents understand and accept that the primary goal of the placement is to return the child home? How comfortable and willing are they in facilitating parent-child visitation? How do they feel about having the child's parents come to their home or bringing the child to another setting for a visit? How do they feel about meeting the parents and working with them re: parenting techniques? How would the applicant deal with criticism of her/his care of the child by the child's parents? How would they deal with competition or jealousy from the child's parents? How would they help the child deal with feelings of conflicting loyalties between both sets of parents? How would they help a child understand unlikely promises from birth parents? How would they help a child plan for reunification with her/his birth parents?
5. How will each applicant and the applicant's family members ensure that a new child will feel comfortable in their home. What space in the home has been designated to be the new child's? How will the applicant address the issue of what the foster child will call him/her?
6. Describe how each applicant would help a child who was racially or culturally different from her/him understand and accept her/his own background. What would they say to a child? What outside supports are available to assist in helping this child learn more about his heritage? What ideas does the applicant have about how to help a child gain a sense of her/his culture and heritage?
7. How will each applicant handle separation when the child leaves for adoption or to return home? How will the applicant prepare herself/himself and her/his family for this loss? What would they say to the children in their home about why the foster child was leaving? To neighbors and friends? What words would they use to reassure the children in their home who were not leaving about their status?
8. Describe each applicant's feelings and attitudes toward search. What do they anticipate their reactions will be when the adoptee begins to search? Do they think they will be able to assist the adoptee in the search? How would they feel to meet members of the birth family as a result of the search, or perhaps have their child maintain an ongoing relationship with members of the birth family?
9. Does each applicant understand her/his responsibilities and liabilities as a resource? Does the applicant understand that it is the foster parent's responsibility to transport the child to medical, dental, and other appointments as necessary? Does the applicant understand that it is possible for a 51A report to be filed on her/his household?

## **VII. MOTIVATION AND FERTILITY**

1. Describe each applicant's response to why she/he wants to do foster care or why she/he wants to adopt. Include how they arrived at this decision to adopt, the intensity of the need for a child each applicant has, and how each would feel should this pursuit not be successful. When did they first decide to adopt? Who thought of it first? What were their expectations for a family when they first married or entered into this relationship? If they are adopting because of a fertility problem, how long was it after learning of their fertility problem that they decided to adopt? What reactions to their childlessness have they had to handle with their family? Their friends?

When did they first think of becoming foster parents? What attracted them to foster parenting? What is their understanding of the differences between foster care and adoption? What types of

experiences are they anticipating in becoming a foster parent? Do they have a fertility problem? If so, has that fertility problem motivated them to become foster parents? How do they anticipate they will feel to return a child to her/his family? How do they anticipate they will feel to have a child move on to an adoptive home?

2. Describe the extent to which each applicant is aware of her/his own need to foster or adopt a child, and what each hopes to achieve for herself/himself. How fulfilling is each applicant's life without having a child in it? How would the applicant feel if she/he were not approved to adopt or foster a child? In what way will a child change the applicant's life style?
3. Describe how each applicant arrived at the point where she/he felt ready to foster or adopt a child. Explain why each feels ready now rather than previously. What brought them to this stage of readiness? What went into the decision-making? Did they consider any other options first?
4. Describe what each applicant sees as the most difficult or challenging part of fostering or adopting. Describe how they feel about taking on that challenge. How does each anticipate a child placed in their home will behave? How can each tell when they have reached their own limits? What would they do if they could not meet the challenges? How would that experience make them feel?
5. Discuss each applicant's current expectations and interest in producing a biological child. Have they previously tried, or are they still trying, for a biological child? Are they still involved in fertility testing? How important is it that they produce their own child? How has each one's sense of masculinity/femininity been affected? Where is each partner with regard to the grieving process?
6. Describe as comprehensively as possible the medical exploration the applicants have participated in, the experiences they have endured, and the medical reasons resulting in their current fertility status. Have they explored their fertility situation medically? If no, why not? How long was it before they went to a doctor to explore their medical situation? Who went first? What prompted it? What tests were done? What were the results? What was their reaction to those tests? How do they understand their medical situation currently? At what point did they decide to stop medical exploration/procedures and why? Will they continue medical experimental procedures?
7. Give examples of how each applicant coped with this loss. Give examples of what this loss means to them, and what their initial reactions were. What was their reaction when the doctor told them the medical situation? Did they talk about it? Did their not being able to have children change their marital relationship in any way? Do they see their fertility problem as one partner's problem or a shared problem?

### **VIII. REFERENCES AND MEDICAL / MENTAL HEALTH HISTORY**

1. Indicate the results of background record checks, including CORI.
2. Indicate the results of medical, employer, school ,and personal references for all family members.
3. Describe any past or present major medical conditions, their treatment, and their possible impact on providing foster or adoptive care. What is the diagnosis? How long has this medical condition existed? What is the treatment? Is it being followed through? What is the prognosis? To what extent has the medical condition affected the applicant's daily routine? What does the applicant's physician report about the condition? Does the Department have a written medical report from the physician? Has this medical condition affected the marriage or relationship? To what extent will adjustments need to be made in the applicant's involvement in parenting? Does this condition in any way compromise the applicant's ability to provide foster care or to adopt?
4. Describe any past or present mental health or alcohol and/or substance abuse history and any impact it could have on providing foster or adoptive care.

### **IX. TRAINING SUMMARY**

1. What is each applicant's understanding of: Basic Facts About Foster Parenting and Adopting, Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Agreement, Financial Information, and the procedures to file a grievance or to request a review or an appeal of a Department decision?
2. Describe the degree of interest, cooperation, and participation observed during the pre-licensing training program specified for the type of licensing applicant is seeking. In which role plays and activities did they participate and how effective were they in those roles? Where were they in their

ideas and thinking when they started as compared to when they ended? What degree of growth was observed with regard to their attitudes about birth parents, difficult background histories, and other specific adoption issues? How realistic are they with regard to how their lives will change with the arrival of a challenging child? Did their child(ren) attend the meeting to which they were invited? Describe the child(ren)'s participation there and questions that she/he raised. How responsive were the applicants in returning weekly homework, required marriage and birth certificates, medicals, references, etc. Describe each applicant's overall affect, self awareness, comfort level, body language, openness, maturity, risk taking, dealing with control and authority, and response to License Study content. If an applicant did not complete the required pre-licensing training program, state the reason(s) a waiver was obtained.

3. Describe any other related trainings each applicant has completed that could enhance her/his ability to provide foster care or to adopt. When did they take those courses, and what was the motivation to take them? Are they planning to take additional courses? If so, in what areas are they interested in obtaining more information?

#### **X. CHILD INTEREST CHARACTERISTICS**

1. State the age, sex, and number of children each applicant would like to foster or adopt, and give the reason she/he chose these characteristics. Indicate the youngest and oldest age range preference the applicant genuinely feels comfortable accepting. At what age limit does the applicant *not* want the Department to call her/him? If kinship/child-specific prospective applicant, describe the child(ren) to be placed. Give specifics of age, gender, any behavior/medical problems. Describe relationship for each kinship/child-specific applicant to the child(ren) to be placed.

2. If there is a preference for a particular sex child, state why. Indicate how comfortable the applicant would be accepting a child of the opposite sex, if there is a preference. Does the applicant *not* want the Department to call them for a child of the opposite sex from what she/he is requesting?

How did the applicant settle on the number of children she/he is requesting?

3. Describe each applicant's ability to foster or adopt a child from a different racial, cultural, and ethnic background. State the ethnic, racial, and cultural preference for a child desired by the applicant. Are there any cultural or religious beliefs, practices, or taboos which would impact the applicant's parenting style or in some way limit the type of child that could be placed with this family? Are there any ethnicities, racial or cultural heritage that the applicant would *not* want to consider?
4. Describe the health issues each applicant feels prepared to handle, the kinds of medical conditions with which she/he feels comfortable, and those she/he especially wishes to avoid. For what reasons does the applicant feel prepared to handle those particular health issues, and what in her/his background or experience makes her/him able to manage them?
5. Describe in detail the kinds of emotional problems and behavioral disorders each applicant feels she/he can handle. (Use Behavior Sheets.) Be specific about what type of personality in a challenging child would fit most comfortably into their home, and what type they are able to acknowledge they could not manage well and why.
6. Describe each applicant's ability to successfully manage a legal risk placement. Describe, as comprehensively as possible, the kind of legal risk situation with which they are comfortable. How willing or able are they to participate in visiting or visiting schedules should that become necessary? How familiar are they with the changing patterns of legal risk situations, and how prepared are they for delays in the child's legal relinquishment process? How would they help a child understand what is happening? Would they tell a child what is happening?
7. Describe the extent to which the applicant feels comfortable with an open adoption and the kind of openness she/he realistically feels she/he can handle. What is their understanding of open adoption and how they might be involved? Who do they believe the open adoption to be for? What amount and type of contact with the birth family over what period of time would be comfortable for them?

#### **XI. LICENSE STUDY SUMMARY/ RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Summarize and describe, using examples, what coping styles and behavior patterns emerged for each applicant during the License Study process. How does each applicant handle stress? Discuss

the implications of these patterns for adoption or foster care. What in her/his experiences of parenting and being parented makes them ready, or not, to cope with the behavior of a challenging child?

How clearly can each applicant communicate what she/he needs in any particular situation or what needs to happen? How accurate are their observations about their own and others' needs? Are they aware of their own and others' feelings?

What issues appear to be unresolved for them, and how will this affect their coping with a challenging child?

Describe each applicant's style of handling losses and how effectively it works for each of them. Discuss its relevance to the foster care or adoption process. What stages of the grieving process are the applicants able to identify? What stages do they appear to be in with regard to their own losses?

What techniques do they plan to use to help children with their feelings? How does this relate to how they handled their own feelings with their losses? Can they acknowledge that any child placed with them will need to stay connected to her/his past and will, in fact, carry the reality of the birth parents with him/her? Describe the applicant's level of compassion, insight, and understanding with regard to critical issues such as continuity of significant connections, attitudes towards birth parents, attitudes towards losses, fertility, and motivation to parent a challenging child.

Describe each applicant's ability to anticipate and address safety issues, especially with regard to the needs of the specific child(ren) likely to be placed with them.

2. Summarize and describe what strengths and needs were observed. How do they communicate and express feelings? How comfortable will they be communicating with foster parents, birth parents, schools, the child? Cite examples which demonstrate their abilities or state with what areas they are still struggling. How able are they to identify differences in needs and behaviors among children?
3. Describe how realistic each applicant is with regard to the kinds of children she/he will be asked to parent. Give examples which demonstrate their readiness, or lack thereof, to parent a challenging child. How do they plan to meet those needs? How skilled are they in communicating with a child at the child's level? How accepting do they seem to be about seeking help from outside resources for a challenging child?
4. State if the applicant withdrew, is licensed, or is not licensed, and give the reasons why. If licensed, indicate whether the applicant is licensed as a foster care or pre-adoptive family, and whether this is a kinship, child-specific or unrestricted family.
5. Recommend by age, sex, number, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/ or cultural background the child or children to be placed with this family. Indicate sibling group capability and why. If recommendations are different from previous section on Child Interest Characteristics, indicate the reasons.
6. Indicate if the applicant(s) should or should not be considered for legal risk placement and why.
7. Indicate if the applicant(s) should or should not be considered for an open adoption and why.

## **XII. LICENSE STUDY UPDATE**

### **Appendix 3**

## **ENHANCED SAFETY ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES**

These Guidelines are intended to assist Department staff and foster/pre-adoptive parents in assessing the safety and well-being of all children placed or to be placed with Department foster/pre-adoptive families. Their purpose is to heighten awareness but not to be all inclusive. They will encourage and prompt discussion between Department staff and foster/pre-adoptive parents that will result in the identification and resolution of any and all safety issues that may exist. The Guidelines will help foster/pre-adoptive parents be on the alert for ways to prevent accidents and utilize strategies that maintain safety and well-being.

### **I. INSIDE THE HOME:**

<b>SAFETY ISSUES</b>	<b>OBSERVATION / QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION</b>
<b>PETS / ANIMALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of pets/animals are kept in the home?</li> <li>• Does any pet/animal on the premises pose a danger to a foster/pre-adoptive child?</li> <li>• What is owner's intent in having pet/animal?</li> <li>• If dog(s):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Verification that dog(s) has up to date vaccinations and rabies shots and is licensed;</li> <li>– Information on breed(s), age(s), sex(es) and size(s);</li> <li>– Observation of dog's behaviors/demeanor with children and with social workers/strangers coming into the home;</li> <li>– Is dog penned/caged at any time? Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Any obedience training?</li> <li>• Have there been any prior dangerous incidents/behaviors? Have complaints or reports been filed with local authorities?</li> <li>• Has a behavior/temperament assessment been completed for any animal(s)? Why? Results?</li> </ul>
<b>WINDOWS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In homes with younger children, are all above ground level windows screened and safety guardrails in place to prevent falls?</li> <li>• Are windows propped open; do they close without slamming down?</li> <li>• Do window/door blinds have no hanging or looped cords?</li> </ul>
<b>MEDICATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all prescribed and/or over-the-counter medications securely stored and not accessible to children/teens?</li> </ul>
<b>STAIRWAYS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In homes with infants/toddlers, are safety gates available and in use?</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are cleansers, cosmetics, sprays, alcoholic beverages, insect repellants and any other items harmful by ingestion/inhalation, securely stored and not accessible to infants/toddlers or children/adolescents with substance abuse and emotional problems placed in the home?</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are additional refrigerators/freezers kept outside kitchen area?</li> <li>• Are safety measures in place when stoves/wood stoves are in use?</li> <li>• Are washers/dryers and other objects secured from younger children climbing in and being trapped?</li> <li>• Are all sharp objects safely secured from children?</li> </ul>

ELECTRICAL OUTLETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In homes with younger children, are all outlets child-proofed with safety caps in place?</li> </ul>
BATHROOMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For younger/special needs children, are baths always supervised?</li> <li>• For younger children, are toilet lids kept closed?</li> <li>• Do tubs and showers have slip resistant mats/floor surfaces?</li> </ul>
BASEMENT / ATTIC / STORAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all large containers kept secured and not accessible to young children?</li> <li>• Are all heavy/sharp tools not accessible to children?</li> </ul>

**II. OUTSIDE THE HOME:**

POOLS  (Above and in-ground, inflatable, wading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are pools fenced, gated, locked, secured?</li> <li>• How is access restricted from inside the home?</li> <li>• Are children supervised when pool is in use?</li> <li>• Are wading and inflatable pools emptied and turned over when not in use?</li> </ul>
BACKYARD AND SURROUNDING PROPERTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If area has ponds, lakes, brooks, wells, etc., is access restricted and supervision plan in place?</li> <li>• Are structures (e.g., garages, sheds) locked? Is children's use restricted?</li> <li>• Is machinery (e.g., lawn mowers, snow blowers) accessible to children?</li> <li>• Are there any abandoned or hazardous objects on the property?</li> <li>• Are gas or charcoal grills accessible?</li> </ul>
PETS / ANIMALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of pets/animals are kept outside the home?</li> <li>• Does any pet/animal on the premises pose a danger to a foster/pre-adoptive child?</li> <li>• What is owner's intent?</li> <li>• What behaviors are demonstrated?</li> <li>• Have there been any incidents, complaints or reports filed with local authorities?</li> <li>• Are they caged, fenced, stabled at any time and why?</li> </ul>
RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT / GAMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are helmets available for all children with bikes, skateboards, roller blades, scooters, and for sports (e.g., baseball, football and hockey)?</li> <li>• Are there any darts, weights, archery, bb-guns, paintball guns accessible to children?</li> <li>• Are safety/supervision plans in place for use/participation?</li> </ul>
CAR SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all seatbelts in working order?</li> <li>• Are car/booster seats appropriate for the age, size, and weight of the child?</li> </ul>

**III. NEIGHBORHOOD:**

SAFETY ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are lakes, ponds, or other bodies of water accessible?</li> <li>• Are traffic, railroad tracks, quarries, construction sites accessible?</li> <li>• Is route to school and/or playground safe?</li> <li>• Are there any other concerns/hazards?</li> </ul>
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## **Appendix 4**

# **Waivers for Placements of Children in Homes with Presumptively Disqualifying Dog Breeds and Other Potentially Dangerous Pets/Animals**

## **Policy**

To promote the safety and well-being of children who may be placed in Department foster/pre-adoptive homes, the Department has established the following standards with regard to pets/animals:

- No animal that poses a danger to a foster/pre-adoptive child is allowed to be maintained on the premises of a Department licensed foster/pre-adoptive home.
- All dogs maintained on the premises of the foster/pre-adoptive home must have up to date vaccinations and rabies shots, and must be licensed in accordance with local requirements.
- No child under age 12 will be placed in a home where a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd dog, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of those 3 breeds, is maintained on the premises, except after a review conducted in accordance with *Regulation 110 CMR 7.105 (18)* and with the approval of the Area Director.
- A licensed foster/pre-adoptive family, with whom the Department has placed a child in Department care or custody under age 12 years, who plans to acquire (or has acquired) a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd dog, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of those 3 breeds, must immediately notify the Department and arrange for the submission of a written request to approve continuation of the placement.

In determining whether a home meets these standards, the Department may request that the foster/pre-adoptive parent obtain and provide to the Department a copy of a behavior/temperament assessment and/or a copy of the veterinary records regarding the animal.

A potential foster/pre-adoptive family, which has a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of these 3 breeds, is presumptively disqualified for placement of a child under age 12 years. This determination means that due to the presence of the dog the family is eligible to apply for licensing but the Department has determined that no child under age 12 years can be placed with the family without prior review and approval by the placing Area Director.

On occasion, an otherwise appropriate placement, found to be in the child's best interests, is precluded due to the existence of such a dog. Consistent with the safety, permanency and well-being of a child in substitute care as the paramount concerns, the Department has established a review process to permit consideration of a home that maintains such a dog.

## **Procedures: Request to Waive Presumptive Disqualification Re: Dog Breeds**

1. **Request for Review.** With the assistance of the child's Social Worker, Supervisor, and/or Area Program Manager, if needed, the family develops and submits to the placing Area Director a request, in writing, for approval to waive the presumptive disqualification regarding dog breeds under the following circumstances:
  - Placement, including emergency placement with a kinship or child-specific family prior to completion of the full License Study, is being considered for a child under age 12 years who is in Department care or custody with a family who is willing and otherwise able to be the child's placement but has a Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd dog, or a dog which mixes at least 2 of those 3 breeds; or
  - A licensed foster/pre-adoptive family, who has a child under age 12 years in Department care or custody placed with them, plans to acquire (or has acquired) such a dog.

The written waiver request includes as much of the following information about the child and the dog as is available from the foster/pre-adoptive family, the biological family, the dog's veterinarian, the

local community's animal control officer and the Department records for the child, family and foster/pre-adoptive family:

- the child's age, sex, size and behavior;
- the dog's age, sex, size and behavior;
- whether the dog has been neutered;
- the number of dogs on the premises;
- the name of the veterinarian that treats the dog;
- whether the dog is penned or caged at anytime, and if so, under what circumstances and for what purposes;
- information from previous interactions between the child and dog, if any;
- whether the child stayed at the prospective foster home in the past;
- whether there have been any safety concerns regarding the dog with the child or any other child; and
- proposed resolutions for maintaining child safety and well-being.

The placing Area Director also considers, as available, statements from the prospective foster/pre-adoptive parent(s) and biological parent(s) that the child is safe around the dog.

To the extent that any of the required information is already available in the case record, such as on the child placement form, a copy of that form may be included as part of the request to the Area Director.

The Area Director establishes a mechanism for an Area Office manager to contact the animal control officer where the dog is maintained or the veterinarian for information regarding any complaints about the dog or any other conditions which may place the child at risk if living in the home with the dog. The mechanism will provide for a manager to obtain the dog owner's authorization to release information to the Department, when needed.

The Department may request the foster/pre-adoptive family to obtain and provide to the Department a copy of a behavior/temperament assessment of the dog and/or a copy of the dog's veterinary records for consideration with the waiver request.

For a **kinship** family with whom a child has been placed on an emergency basis prior to completion of the full License Study, this information must be provided to the placing Area Director prior to, or within 2 working days after, the emergency placement.

2. **Placing AD Review and Approval.** The placing Area Director reviews the available information and may consult with the Regional Director on an as-needed basis. Based on her/his review of all the factors listed in Procedure 1 above, the placing Area Director may authorize the placement if she/he determines that:

- the existence of the dog on the premises of the foster/pre-adoptive home does not appear to present a risk of harm to the child;
- the dog has never bitten any person; and
- the child's best interests would be served by placement in the foster/pre-adoptive home.

The placing Area Director immediately informs the hosting Area Director (if different) of the decision and provides a copy of the information reviewed. If the hosting Area Director disagrees with the decision, she/he immediately notifies the Regional Director who resolves the disagreement. If more than one Region is involved and both placing and hosting Regional Directors are unable to reach agreement, the hosting Regional Director notifies the Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations/designee who resolves the disagreement.

3. **Waiver Regarding Other Animals.** When the Family Resource Worker or child's Social Worker, in consultation with her/his Supervisor and/or Area Program Manager, has concerns regarding the risk of harm posed to any anticipated or actually placed child by any other pet or animal that is being maintained on the premises of a potential or current foster/pre-adoptive family, she/he may require the family to request from the placing Area Director approval of a waiver that includes specific resolutions for maintaining child safety and well-being.

**Appendix 5** [The following new information is based on updated Department regulation information; see 110 CMR 7.106.]

## **Licensing of Department Employees as Department Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families**

### **Policy**

The Department supports employees in becoming licensed Department foster/pre-adoptive families for children who are in its care or custody by establishing procedures that address approval of:

- the Department employee's request to seek licensing, and
- the decision to place a specific child who is in Department care or custody with a Department employee who has become licensed as a Department foster/pre-adoptive parent.

An important objective of these procedures is to ensure that no child who is in Department care or custody is placed with a Department employee who works in the same office that has case assignment responsibility for either the child or her/his family.

Both Department employee requests to seek licensing as a Department foster/pre-adoptive family and the decisions regarding placements of specific children who are in Department care or custody with them are subject to review and approval by a Central Office review team. The team consists of the Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations (Deputy Commissioner), General Counsel and Assistant Commissioner (Assistant Commissioner) for foster care and adoption or their designees. Requests for review and decision by the Central Office review team are directed to the Deputy Commissioner/designee.

The Department enacts measures to preserve confidentiality regarding the Department employee's family life throughout the License Study process and afterwards if she/he becomes a foster/pre-adoptive parent for a child who is in Department care or custody. Employees seeking to become Department foster/pre-adoptive parents must preserve the confidentiality rights of any child who might be placed with them and her/his family. **NOTE: Employees are not allowed to examine Department records for a child or her/his family except as required by their official duties.**

To promote licensing of Department employees in a manner that is objective and consistent with the Department's standards, the Department refers employees for completion of the License Study to:

- private agencies under contract for this purpose,
- an Area Office different from the Area Office in which the employee works, or has previously worked, or
- an Area Office in a different Region if the employee works in a Regional Office.

For an employee working in the Department's Central Office who is seeking licensing as a Department foster/pre-adoptive parent, the Deputy Commissioner/designee determines where the employee should be referred for a License Study.

Following licensing, the Central Office review team may approve placement of a specific child who is in Department care or custody with the Department employee when the placement is in the child's best interests. Before the placement occurs, the Deputy Commissioner/designee, in conjunction with the Regional Director/designee, or Senior Staff member/designee where applicable, will work with the Department employee, child and family to ensure that the Department employee does not work in the same office that has case assignment responsibility for either the child or her/his family.

**Department Employees Providing FOSTER CARE for Another Agency.** Department employees seeking to provide foster care for another agency must request, in writing, approval to apply from the Deputy Commissioner/designee before they begin the process. The Deputy Commissioner/designee will determine if it is permissible for the Department employee to apply to provide foster care for another agency and the procedures the Department employee will need to follow to obtain approval to apply. The Deputy Commissioner/designee will also determine the procedures that will be followed to approve

placement of a child who is in Department care or custody with the Department employee who has been licensed to provide foster care by another agency.

**Department Employees Seeking to Arrange ADOPTION through Another Agency.** These policies and procedures do not preclude Department employees from applying to become, and being approved as, pre-adoptive parents by any private, licensed placement agency, nor is it necessary for the Department employee to request approval from the Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations/designee, unless the Department employee is seeking to adopt a child who is in Department care or custody. When the prospective adoption involves a child who is in Department care or custody, the Department employee is required to request approval from the Central Office review team before beginning the licensing process or before the placement decision is made if she/he was licensed without a specific adoptive child having been previously identified.

**Other Types of Continuing Relationships Outside the Workplace.** The Department also recognizes that maintaining relationships that extend beyond the workplace can be valuable to children who are in Department care or custody and to employees. Examples include such circumstances as a Department employee seeking to become a mentor for a child or seeking/agreeing to visit a child outside of the workplace requirements from a formerly or currently assigned family. When such circumstances arise, the Department requires the employee to submit a request, in writing, to the Deputy Commissioner/designee for prior approval by the Central Office review team of the proposed arrangement. The Central Office review team will determine the procedures to be followed for reviewing and approving the planned continuing connection.

### **Procedures: Approval for Licensing as a Department Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family**

1. **Employee Seeks Licensing as a Department UNRESTRICTED Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent.** The employee submits a written request to the Deputy Commissioner/designee, indicating the type of licensing she/he is seeking. The employee is notified, in writing, as to who will be conducting the License Study based on their work location as specified below.
2. **Employee Seeks Licensing as a Department KINSHIP or CHILD-SPECIFIC Foster/Pre-Adoptive Parent.** The Department encourages employees to become licensed as kinship or child-specific families for children who are kin, with whom they have an ongoing relationship or with whom they would like to maintain a life-long family connection. The employee submits a written request to the Deputy Commissioner/designee, indicating the type of licensing she/he is seeking and including the following information:
  - the name of the child she/he would like to have placed with her/him,
  - the child's date of birth (if known),
  - the Area Office and Social Worker responsible for the child and child's family (if known),
  - a brief description of how she/he is related to or acquainted with the child, and
  - a brief description of the nature, frequency and location of all contacts that have occurred between the child and the employee up to the date of the request.
3. **Central Office Committee Reviews the Request.** The Deputy Commissioner/designee, General Counsel/designee and Assistant Commissioner/designee review the request and, when appropriate, arrange for the License Study to be conducted by either:
  - a private agency contracted for this purpose,
  - a different Area Office than the one in which the employee works (or one in which she/he has worked in the past) or
  - an Area or Regional Office in a different Region if the employee (including a Department Attorney) works (or has worked in the past) in a Regional Office.
4. **Review Outcome Notification.** Within 30 calendar days after the date the request was received, the Deputy Commissioner/designee notifies the employee, in writing, of the outcome of the request review. When a License Study will be conducted, the Deputy/designee also informs the employee of:
  - who will be completing the License Study and
  - the Committee's determinations regarding the nature, frequency and location of the contact, if any, that may occur between the employee and a specific child for whom she/he is seeking to

become foster/pre-adoptive parent while the License Study is being completed and the decision about the child's placement is being made.

### **Procedures: Approval for Licensing by Another Agency to Provide Foster Care**

*[NOTE: Department employees do not need Department approval to apply to become licensed to adopt a child from a private, licensed placement agency. However, Department approval will be required if the child the employee seeks to have placed with her/him for purposes of adoption is in Department care or custody—see below “Procedures: Approval of Placement of a Child in Department Care/Custody with a Department Employee.”]*

- 1. Employee Requests Approval to Provide Foster Care for Another Agency.** Before applying to the other agency, the Department employee submits a written request to the Department Deputy Commissioner/designee that states:
  - the name and address of the agency for which the Department employee is seeking to provide foster care;
  - the reason(s) why she/he would like to provide foster care for the other agency; and
  - the name of the specific child she/he would like to have placed with her/him (if known) and a brief description of how she/he is related to or acquainted with the child.
- 2. Review of Request and Outcome Notification.** The Deputy Commissioner/ designee determines whether the request is permissible and the procedures that will be required to review the request. Within 30 calendar days after the date the request was received, the Deputy Commissioner/designee notifies the Department employee of the outcome, in writing.

### **Procedures: Approval of Placement of a Child in Department Care/Custody with a Department Employee**

- 1. Request for Approval of Placement with Department Employee.** When placement of a child who is in Department care or custody with a Department employee is sought, the child's Social Worker (or Adoption Social Worker) submits a request, in writing, to the Deputy Commissioner/designee for approval to place the specific child with the Department employee. This occurs regardless of whether the employee has been licensed by the Department or another agency for the purpose of foster care or adoption.
- 2. Central Office Team Review of Placement Request.** All requests for placement of a child who is in Department care or custody with a Department employee are reviewed by a team consisting of the Deputy Commissioner/designee, General Counsel/designee and Assistant Commissioner/designee, regardless of whether the Department employee works in an Area, Regional or Central Office or she/he has been licensed by the Department or another agency.
- 3. Review Outcome Notification.** Within 30 calendar days after the date the request was received, the Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations/designee notifies the Department employee of the decision regarding the child's placement, in writing, with a copy to the child's Social Worker (or Adoption Social Worker), the Area and Regional Director (or reporting manager if applicable) responsible for the employee and the Area and Regional Director responsible for the child and child's family.
- 4. Post-Placement Case Assignment Responsibility.** Prior to the date of placement with the Department employee, the Deputy Commissioner/designee, in conjunction with the Regional Director/designee, or Senior Staff member if applicable, arranges case assignment or the employee's work location to provide for the child and family's cases (when separate) to be assigned to:
  - a different Area Office than the one in which the employee works (or one in which she/he has worked in the past),
  - an Area in a different Region if the employee (including a Department Attorney) works (or has worked in the past) in a Regional Office or
  - a private agency contracted for this purpose.

## **Procedures: Approval of Continuing or Establishing Relationships Outside the Workplace**

1. **Department Employee Requests to Continue or Establish Relationship with Child in Department Care/Custody.** When a Department employee would like to continue or establish a relationship with a child who is in Department care or custody whom she/he has come to know through her/his employment at Department, she/he submits a written request to do so to the Deputy Commissioner/designee. The request specifies:
  - the name of the child with whom she/he would like to maintain or establish a continuing relationship outside the workplace,
  - the child's date of birth (if known),
  - a brief description of how she/he has become acquainted with the child,
  - the area office and/or social worker assigned to the child and child's family,
  - a brief description of the nature, frequency and location of all contacts that have occurred between the child and the employee up to the date of the request, and
  - a brief description of the nature, frequency and location of the contacts she/he would like to have in the future with the child.
2. **Review of Request and Outcome Notification.** The Central Office review team determines the procedures that will be required to review the request. Within 30 calendar days after the date the request was received, the Deputy Commissioner/designee notifies the Department employee of the outcome, in writing, with a copy to the child's and family's Social Worker, the Area and Regional Director of the employee (or reporting manager where applicable), and the Area and Regional director responsible for the child and child's family.
3. **Post-Approval Case Assignment Responsibility.** The Deputy Commissioner/designee works, in consultation with the Regional Director/designee or Senior Staff member (as applicable), arranges case assignment or the employee's work location to provide for the child and family's cases (when separate) to be assigned to:
  - a different Area Office than the one in which the employee works (or one in which she/he has worked in the past),
  - an Area in a different Region if the employee (including a Department Attorney) works (or has worked in the past) in a Regional Office or
  - a private agency contracted for this purpose.

**Appendix 6**

**Operational Map of Family Resource Activities**

TASK	Kinship & Child-Specific Foster Care & Adoption	Unrestricted Foster Care	Unrestricted Adoption
<p><b><u>Recruitment/Identification of Foster/Pre-Adoptive Families</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Toll-Free Telephone</li> <li>• Statewide Recruitment</li> <li>• Local Recruitment</li> <li>• FamilyNet Person Search &amp; Adding Inquiry Information</li> <li>• ICPC Request (Only for Potential Kinship Resource for Child in Department Custody)</li> </ul>	<p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>RO – FRW (If Child Profile completed to obtain match)</p>	<p>Central Office</p> <p>Central Office</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p>	<p>Central Office</p> <p>Central Office</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p>
<p><b><u>Initial Eligibility Screening</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial BRC</li> <li>• Home Visit(s) (Including interviews, physical requirements checklist, informational materials, application)</li> <li>• Full Household BRC</li> <li>• Contacts for Verification</li> <li>• Physical Requirements Assistance &amp; Waiver Request (For kinship family only)</li> <li>• Physical Requirements Assistance &amp; Waiver Approval (For kinship family only)</li> <li>• Disqualifying Dog Breed or Dangerous Pet/Animal Waiver Request</li> </ul>	<p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW (if needed prior to emergency placement)</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Placing AD/designee (For support resources)</p> <p>AO – Hosting AD/designee (For 30 day License Study period furniture &amp; well water waivers &amp; for 35 sq. ft./child bedroom space waiver)</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW (if needed prior to emergency placement)</p>	<p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p>	<p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p>



TASK	Kinship & Child-Specific Foster Care & Adoption	Unrestricted Foster Care	Unrestricted Adoption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License Study Decision &amp; Notice</li> <li>Licensed Home Follow-Up (Including completing Agreement, Professional Development Plan &amp; verifying receipt of documents)</li> <li>Follow-Up When License Denied &amp; Child Resides in Home</li> <li>Providing Family with License Study Upon Request</li> </ul>	<p>AO – Hosting AD/designee (FRW informs child’s SW and Department Attorney (if court-involved))</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD</p> <p>AO – FRW</p>	<p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p>	<p>RO – Hosting RD/designee</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p>
<p><b><u>Placement Support</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probationary Period Monthly Visits</li> <li>Probationary Period Recommendation</li> <li>Post-Probationary Period Every Other Month Visits</li> <li>Waiver of Capacity Limits Request</li> <li>Waiver of Capacity Limits Approval</li> <li>Approval of Youth’s Family-Based Living Arrangement</li> </ul>	<p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Placing AD</p> <p>RO – Hosting RD</p> <p>AO – Youth’s SW</p>	<p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Placing AD</p> <p>RO – Hosting RD</p> <p>AO – Youth’s SW</p>	<p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW (= contact, not visit, until adoptive child placed or 6 months after licensing)</p> <p>AO – Placing AD</p> <p>RO – Hosting RD</p>
<p><b><u>Annual Reassessments</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Reassessment Notice</li> <li>Annual Reassessment Tasks (Including record review, input from child SWs, updating record, training review, home visit, obtaining releases, BRCs, physical requirements checklist, optional references, unresolvable issues notice—as needed &amp; follow-up on family’s needs)</li> <li>Annual Reassessment Decision</li> <li>Outcome Notice</li> <li>Related Annual Reassessment Activities (Including copy to family upon request, updating Professional Development Plan, sharing outcome with child SWs, arranging for completion of Agreement &amp; CPA &amp; FamilyNet documentation)</li> <li>Follow-Up When License Denied &amp; Child Resides in Home</li> </ul>	<p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD</p>	<p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD</p>	<p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – Hosting RD/designee</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – Hosting RD informs Placing AD</p>

TASK	Kinship & Child-Specific Foster Care & Adoption	Unrestricted Foster Care	Unrestricted Adoption
<b><u>License Renewal Study</u></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License Renewal Study Notice</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License Renewal Study Tasks (Including record review, input from child SWs, updating record, training review, home visit, obtaining releases, BRCs, physical requirements checklist, school &amp; optional references, unresolvable issues notice—as needed &amp; follow-up on family's needs)</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License Renewal Study Decision</li> </ul>	AO – Hosting AD/designee	AO – Hosting AD/designee	RO – Hosting RD/designee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome Notice</li> </ul>	AO – Hosting AD/designee	AO – Hosting AD/designee	RO – Hosting RD/designee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Related License Renewal Study Activities (Including copy to family upon request, updating Professional Development Plan, sharing outcome with child SWs, arranging for completion of Agreement &amp; CPA &amp; FamilyNet documentation)</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-Up When License Denied &amp; Child Resides in Home</li> </ul>	AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD	AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD	RO – Hosting RD informs Placing AD
<b><u>Limited Reassessments</u></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited Reassessment Notice</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited Reassessment Tasks (Including home visit &amp; optional record review, input from child SWs, BRCs, physical requirements checklist, investigator contacts, references &amp; follow-up on family's needs)</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited Reassessment Decision</li> </ul>	AO – Hosting AD/designee	AO – Hosting AD/designee	RO – Hosting RD/designee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome Notice</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Related Limited Reassessment Activities (Including copy to family upon request, sharing outcome with child SWs, reviewing &amp; updating Agreement &amp; CPA if needed &amp; FamilyNet documentation)</li> </ul>	AO – FRW	AO – FRW	RO – FRW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-Up When License Denied &amp; Child Resides in Home</li> </ul>	AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD	AO – Hosting AD informs Placing AD	RO – Hosting RD informs Placing AD
<b><u>Removal of Children from Foster/Pre-Adoptive Homes</u></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency Removal</li> </ul>	AO – Child's SW (normally); requires AD/designee approval	AO – Child's SW (normally); requires AD/designee approval	AO – Child's SW (normally); requires AD/designee approval

TASK	Kinship & Child-Specific Foster Care & Adoption	Unrestricted Foster Care	Unrestricted Adoption
<p><b>Initiated by Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Visit</li> <li>• Notice of Removal</li> <li>• Informing Others</li> <li>• FamilyNet Foster/Pre-Adoptive Family Documentation</li> </ul> <p><b>In Order to Achieve a More Suitable Placement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of Removal</li> <li>• Informing Others</li> </ul> <p><b>Supported 51B in which Foster/ Pre-Adoptive Parent or Other Household Member is Identified as Alleged Perpetrator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited Reassessment</li> <li>• Notice of Removal</li> <li>• Informing Others</li> </ul> <p><b>When the Department Decides to Deny or Revoke License &amp; Child Resides in the Home</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of Removal</li> <li>• Informing Others</li> </ul>	<p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p>	<p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; FRW</p>	<p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; RO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; RO – FRW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW</p> <p>AO – Child’s SW &amp; RO – FRW</p>
<p><b><u>Closing a Foster/Pre-Adoptive Home</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval</li> <li>• Home Visit When Closing Initiated by Family or Provision of Closing Information When Closing Initiated by the Department</li> <li>• Notice of Closing</li> <li>• Closing Dictation Summary</li> <li>• FamilyNet Documentation</li> </ul>	<p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p>	<p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p> <p>AO – FRW</p>	<p>RO – Hosting RD/designee</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p> <p>RO – FRW</p>
<p><b><u>When Removal or Closing Decisions Involve 2 Department Offices</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of 2<sup>nd</sup> Department Office</li> </ul>	<p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p>	<p>AO – Hosting AD/designee</p>	<p>RO – Hosting RD/designee</p>