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## I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Foster/adoptive homes **\* and foster/adoptive relative/kinship homes** shall meet the minimum environmental, health and safety requirements as per DCFS Residential Licensing regulations. Home Development (HD) Workers shall verify through observation of the home, discussion with the applicants during the initial home study, and discussion during the re-certification that the environmental, health and fire safety requirements are understood and will be adhered to during each child's placement. Documentation of this verification and understanding that the home meets the minimum environmental, health and safety requirements shall be made by the foster/adoptive **caregiver(s) or foster/adoptive relative/kinship caregiver(s)** and the assigned HD Worker's signature on **CW HDU 5 or HDU 5 RK** (Foster/Adoptive Home Evaluation for Environmental, Health and Fire Safety of the Foster/Adoptive Home). **The CW Form HDU 5 or HDU 5K** is to be used at re-certification of the family and shall be filed in the foster/adoptive home record.

## II. PROCEDURES

### A. INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT

Foster/adoptive **caregivers** shall:

- Have a kitchen with a working stove, oven, refrigerator and sink, pots and pans in which to cook, and dishes on which to serve sufficient for each household member to have his own dish at mealtime. The kitchen shall also be equipped with cleaning supplies for the sanitary maintenance of food preparation/service areas and materials.
- Maintain all cooking and refrigeration equipment in working order and sanitary condition.

Foster/adoptive relative/kinship caregivers shall:

- **Have a sanitary cooking area to prepare hot food, and working refrigerator and sink.**


The Foster/Adoptive home shall have:

- An indoor dining area conducive to eating, furnished with sufficient furniture so that all members of the household can eat together; and
- An area, not a bedroom, designated for living space furnished with seating space for all family members and accessible to all members of the family.


Sleeping arrangements **in foster/adoptive homes \*\*** shall be approved by the HD Worker and shall meet the following criteria:

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- not permit children over the age of six years of age to share a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex;
- permit no more than four children to a bedroom;

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- \* children with the exception of infants, ages 6 months and below, shall not share a bedroom with adults. Exceptions may be granted as noted below; however, a child shall not share a bed with an adult under any circumstances;
  - an exception may be granted when a child needs close supervision due to illness or medical condition and approval is received from the child's CW manager and Documentation of the exception shall be in the foster/adoptive parent(s) record and shall include the following:
    - (a). name of child sharing the room with an adult for which approval is granted,
    - (b). name of adult(s) sharing the room with the child for which approval is granted,
    - (c). description of illness or medical condition warranting the exception being granted,
    - (d). timeframe for which approval is granted,
    - (e). signature and date of child welfare manager granting approval, and
    - (f). conditions, if any for which the approval is granted.
  - an exception may be granted if the adult is a young adult in the DCFS Extended Foster Care Program and was already sharing a room with the child upon the youth reaching adulthood. No young adult in the DCFS Extended Foster Care Program shall be newly placed in a home whereby they would be required to share a bedroom with a child. Refer to policy 6-2220 (Extended Foster Care Placement Array)
  - documentation of the exception from the Extended Care Manager shall be on file prior to the young adult in the DCFS Extended Foster Care Program attaining their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and documentation shall include the following:
    - (a). name of the foster/adoptive home for which approval is granted,
    - (b). names and birth dates of children sharing the room with the young adult in the DCFS Extended Foster Care Program for which approval is granted;
- provide transgender youth with special consideration about sleeping arrangements as discussed in the LGBT Handbook and in consultation between the foster caregiver and the child's caseworker.
- provide each child with his/her own free standing bed including bunk beds, and the mattress must be at least standard twin size and each infant must have his/her own crib; \*\*\* all mattresses shall have a clean, comfortable, non-toxic mattress with a waterproof cover and, upon placement, each child should receive a new mattress or new water proof mattress cover; trundle beds, pack-n-play and baby boxes are not approved free standing beds;
- infants shall be placed in an approved crib for sleeping per current industry safety standards:
  - the crib shall be equipped with a firm mattress and well-fitting sheets; \*\*

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- the minimum height from the top of the mattress to the top of the crib rail shall be 20 inches at the highest point;
  - mattresses shall be of standard size so that the mattress fits the crib frame without gaps of more than one-half inch;
  - homemade mattresses are prohibited;
  - the minimum height from the top of the mattress to the top of the crib rail shall be 20 inches at the highest point;
  - the mattress support system shall not be easily dislodged from any point of the crib by an upward force from underneath the crib;
  - cribs shall be free of toys and other soft bedding, including blankets, comforters, bumper pads, pillows, stuffed animals, and wedges when the infant is in the crib;
  - an infant shall be placed on his/her back for sleeping; written authorization from the infant's physician is required for any other sleeping position;
  - provide a minimum of one set of bed linens, blankets and pillow for each child;
  - provide a chest, dresser, or other adequate storage space for a child's clothing and personal belongings in the child's bedroom and a designated space for hanging up clothes in or near the bedroom occupied by the child;
  - allow some scope in the decorations of the sleeping areas for the personal tastes and expressions of the child;
  - each bedroom shall have adequate space to be used by children for daily activities;
- Sleeping arrangements in foster/adoptive relative/kinship homes shall meet the following criteria:**
- children over the age of six years of age may not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex; after careful assessment, siblings of the opposite sex may share a bedroom ages 10 or under;
  - each child should have his own bed or sleeping area; after careful assessment, siblings of the same sex, ages 2 and above may share a double or larger bed;
  - children with the exception of infants, ages 6 months and below, shall not share a bedroom with adults; exceptions may be granted as noted below; however, a child shall not share a bed with an adult under any circumstances;
    - an exception may be granted when a child needs close supervision due to illness or medical condition and approval is received from the child's CW manager and documentation of the exception shall be in the foster/adoptive parent(s) record and shall include the following:
      - (a). name of child sharing the room with an adult for which approval is granted,
      - (b). name of adult(s) sharing the room with the child for which approval is granted,
      - (c). description of illness or medical condition warranting the exception being granted,
      - (d). timeframe for which approval is granted,
      - (e). signature and date of child welfare manager granting approval, and
      - (f). conditions, if any for which the approval is granted. \*\*


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- \* an exception may be granted if the adult is a young adult in the DCFS Extended Foster Care Program and was already sharing a room with the child upon the youth reaching adulthood; no young adult in the DCFS Extended Foster Care Program shall be newly placed in a home whereby they would be required to share a bedroom with a child. Refer to policy 6-2220 (Extended Foster Care Placement Array).
  - provide each child with his/her own bed or sleeping area such as a trundle bed, fold-out couch or futon;
    - provide each infant with his/her own crib; a pack-and-play be used for extended sleep no more than 3 month's from date of child's placement; cribs and pack-and-plays used for extended sleep shall be free of toys and other soft bedding, including blankets, comforters, bumper pads, pillows, stuffed animals, and wedges when the infant is in the crib; pack-and-plays
    - each bed or crib has a clean, comfortable, non- toxic standard size mattress for the bed frame size with a waterproof mattress cover;
    - an infant shall be placed on his/her back for sleeping; written authorization from the infant's physician is required for any other sleeping position;
- Foster/adoptive and relative/kinship caregivers shall:
- allow each child sufficient privacy;
  - the home shall be free of security/video cameras in the bedroom of a child over the age of 5 years; a security/video camera may be used in a child's bedroom for a child over the age of 5 years with developmental, medical, or behavioral needs per written documentation filed in the Home Development record of discussion with the child's caregiver, child (if age/developmentally appropriate), Foster Care Worker/Supervisor and Child Welfare Manager;
  - have a minimum of one flush toilet, one washbasin with running water and one bath or shower with hot and cold water all in good condition; and
  - equip each bathroom with toilet paper, towels, soap and other items required for personal hygiene and grooming.

## B. LOCATION OF THE HOME

The foster/adoptive \*\* home shall be accessible to schools, recreation, churches, medical care and community facilities.

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## C. EXTERIOR ENVIRONMENT

The foster/adoptive **\* or relative/kinship foster/adoptive** home shall be reasonably safe, in good repair and comparable in appearance and maintenance to other family homes in the community.

The home and the exterior around the home shall be free from objects, materials and conditions which constitute a danger to the children served.

## D. PLAY AREA AND EQUIPMENT


A foster/adoptive home shall have a safe outdoor play area which children may use either on the property or within a reasonable distance from the property.

Any play equipment on the property shall be safe, **well-constructed** and suitable for the children served.

## E. WATER SAFETY

Before a DCFS foster/adoptive parent home **or relative/kinship foster/adoptive home** is certified, HD staff must ensure that the home, **including a relative/kinship foster/adoptive home** is in compliance with the following water safety requirements:

1. Foster/adoptive parents who have a swimming pool must have knowledge of water safety tips and provide supervision when the child is in the pool. This includes wading pools and hot tubs.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall lock swimming and wading pool areas and make them inaccessible to children except when supervised. The door leading from the house to the pool must be protected with an additional door lock and an alarm that produces an audible sound when a door is opened.
3. **A barrier of fence at least 4 feet high** must be installed around the pool. The fence must have a gate that is self-closing and locked when the pool is not in use. At least one foster/adoptive **caregiver** must know how to swim and be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The foster/adoptive **caregiver** that is CPR certified should be the one that is with the children when swimming.
4. An additional safety precaution for swimming pools, if desired by foster parents **caregivers**, is the purchase of a pool alarm or pool cover. Foster parents are not required to purchase a pool alarm or pool cover. A maximum amount of \$25.00 will be reimbursed for a pool alarm or alternative such as a pool cover using TIPS major/minor 800/817, Incidental Expenses. The expenses will be paid in the Foster Care Program using the TIPS number of a foster child placed in the home. Once a pool alarm or pool cover is purchased, it will be the responsibility of the foster **caregivers** to maintain proper operation, including periodic testing of the pool alarm in accordance with the manufacturer's directions.

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5. When a wading pool or above-ground pool is not being used, the water shall be drained and the pool is put up and stored; if the swimming or wading pool is not emptied after each use, the pool shall have a working pump and filtering system. \*\*
6. A child should never be able to enter the pool area unaccompanied by an adult.
7. The foster/adoptive parent must have pool rules and safety precautions that can be discussed (on an age appropriate level) with foster children prior to them having access to the pool.
8. \* The pool must be equipped with a life saving device such as a ring buoy.
9. Hot tubs and spas must have safety covers that are locked when not in use.
10. Open cisterns, wells, ditches, fish ponds, and other bodies of water shall be made inaccessible to children.

Foster/adoptive caregivers shall have a written plan approved by the HD Worker for protecting children from swimming and/or wading pools, ponds, creeks and other areas of water that may run through or near their property. HD staff shall discuss the plan with the family at annual visits. The written plan must be filed in the HD record and shall include one or more of the following:


- removing the exterior ladder from the pool;
- ensuring the gate is locked when the pool is not in use;
- removing toys from pool and/or wading area;
- providing supervision for the child when near the swimming and/or wading pool, pond, creek or other body of water; and
- providing a fence or other environmental restraint for bodies of water near the home, depending on the age of the child and the proximity of the water area.

## F. GENERAL SAFETY

Foster/adoptive caregivers and foster/adoptive relative caregivers shall:

- Assure the home has working heating, cooling and ventilation systems in all rooms.
- Provide screens for windows and doors if used for outside ventilation.
- Maintain an operating telephone in the home. A comprehensive list of emergency telephone numbers to include the number for poison control shall be posted next to the telephone if the phone is stationary or in a common area used by children/youth for portable or cell phones.
- Have a written plan stated on the HDU 5 or HDU 5RK, or the safe storage of drugs, poison (including pesticides/herbicides), alcoholic beverages, or other harmful materials. Alcoholic beverages that do not require refrigeration shall be stored in a place inaccessible to the child. Alcoholic beverages that require refrigeration are to be stored in the back of the refrigerator.
- Take measures to keep the home and premises free of rodents and insects.



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**Foster/adoptive caregivers shall:**

- Have a written plan approved by the HD Worker for restricting the children's access to potentially dangerous animals. Foster/adoptive **caregivers \*\*** shall provide a statement from their veterinarian to document that their pets have received the required current immunizations. The State Sanitary Code 3:001-3:002, requires that all dogs and cats over the age of three months must be vaccinated against rabies annually. However, local ordinances may require additional immunizations. The foster/adoptive **\* caregiver** shall provide a copy of the required permit allowing him/her to keep any exotic animal which he/she might have as a pet. The HD Worker shall question the applicant about his/her pet's history around strangers and family members to determine whether the animal has ever snapped at or bitten anyone. A family should not be certified with any pet which presents a danger to a child.

**Relative foster/adoptive caregivers shall:**

- Have a written plan approved by the HD Worker for restricting the children's access to potentially dangerous animals.
- The HD Worker shall question the caregiver about his/her pet's history around strangers and family members to determine whether the animal has ever snapped at or bitten anyone. A family with any pet which presents a possible danger to child should be carefully assessed and the situation discussed with the child's caseworker and supervisor before a certification decision is made.

**All foster/adoptive and relative/kinship foster/adoptive caregivers shall:**

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- Store dangerous weapons, firearms, air guns, BB guns, hunting slingshots, and other projectile weapons in a locked area inaccessible to children; ammunition shall be stored in a separate locked area.
- Have household first aid supplies for treating minor cuts, burns and other minor injuries.

## **G. FIRE SAFETY**

The home or apartment shall be free from fire hazards, such as faulty electric cords and appliances, over-loaded electrical outlets, or non-maintained fireplaces and chimneys.

**All foster/adoptive and relative/kinship foster/adoptive caregivers shall:**

- Equip the home or apartment with operating smoke alarms within ten feet of each bedroom **or in the sleeping area of the relative/kinship foster/adoptive home.**
- Place a portable chemical fire extinguisher in the cooking area of the home or apartment.
- Equip the home with a carbon monoxide detector in each bedroom or in the sleeping area of the relative/kinship foster/adoptive home if the home is heated with solid fuels such as wood or gas. **\*\***

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- Provide a written plan approved by the HD Worker and filed in the record for evacuating the home or apartment in case of emergency. The plan shall be practiced at least quarterly with the children to make sure that all children understand the procedures.
- Store combustible items away from sources of heat.
- Shield all home heating units and other hot surfaces against accidental contact.
- Provide a statement that they maintain safe conditions with properly installed, maintained and operated solid fuel heating stoves, systems and fireplaces as well as gas and electric heaters and furnaces.
- \* Have a door and at least one other unrestricted exit in their home, including mobile homes, which provide unrestricted exits in case of fire. In addition, two story dwellings should have an unrestricted exit leading from the secondary story; and a means of safe escape such as a fire escape ladder or staircase leading to the ground level.

## H. SANITATION AND HEALTH

Foster/adoptive and relative/kinship caregivers shall keep the home clean and free of hazards to the health and well-being of the family.


Foster/adoptive and relative/kinship foster/adoptive homes shall have a continuous supply of clean drinking water. If the water is not from a public, parish or city water supply, the foster/adoptive caregivers shall have the water tested and approved by the local health authority and provide a copy of the report to the HD Worker. The HD Worker shall request this of the local parish Health Unit.

The foster/adoptive home shall have a sewerage system which will not pose a hazard to the health or safety of the family. If there is a parish or city sewerage system, the family is required to be tied into it. If no parish or city sewerage system is available, the home shall have a septic tank. The HD Worker shall observe the site of the septic tank to determine whether there is any bubbling or standing water or any odor from sewerage or other source which would indicate a problem with the septic system. When there is a question about the safety of the septic tank system, the family shall be responsible for contacting the local Sanitarian to have the sewerage system inspected and corrected if necessary, if the family chooses to proceed with the certification process.

The relative/kinship foster/adoptive home shall have a sewerage system which will not pose a hazard to the health or safety of the family. The relative/foster adoptive family shall provide a written statement (HDU5 RK) that their home has an appropriate and working connection to a sewage system or septic tank.

The milk served to children in a foster/adoptive home shall be Grade A and pasteurized or from an approved source.



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All plumbing in the foster/adoptive or relative/kinship foster/adoptive home shall be in working order.

The foster/adoptive and relative/kinship foster adoptive \*\* home shall have an adequate supply of hot water for bathing and dishwashing. Hot water accessible to children shall not exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit at the outlet.


Foster/adoptive \* caregivers shall verify their water temperature by using a candy thermometer or other device and adjusting the temperature controls if necessary.

## I. TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Foster/adoptive and relative/kinship foster/adoptive caregivers shall:

- Have a safe means of transportation or transportation plan adequate to meet the needs of the household (including the foster/adoptive child)
- Agree to evacuate on short notice, if and when necessary.
- There shall be seat space for every passenger who travels in the vehicle at the same time.
- Provide a written statement as proof that any vehicle in their household used to transport children shall be properly maintained, licensed and inspected as required by State law.
- Provide a copy of their driver's license and/or copies of all driver's licenses household members that transport children in foster care.
- Agree to allow the children to be transported only by persons who are properly licensed to operate a vehicle according to State law.
- Provide a written statement as proof that they carry a sufficient amount of liability insurance as required by law for any of their vehicles that transport children in foster care.
- Provide proof that any vehicle which the child is permitted to drive shall carry sufficient liability insurance covering the child's use of the vehicle. The agency recommends that foster parents obtain \$300,000 worth of liability insurance for a minor foster child driving their car.
- Provide a written statement ( [CW Form HDU 5](#) or [CW Form HDU 5RK](#)) as proof that they will use seat belts and child restraints as required by Louisiana law and as appropriate for the child's age.

Foster/adoptive caregivers shall not permit a child to operate a motor vehicle without a court order. (Refer to Foster Care Policy Manual, Section [6-1312, \(Driving\)](#) for a description of the agency's policy on allowing a foster child to drive.)

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### III. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

[CW Form HDU-5](#), Foster Adoptive Home Evaluation for Environmental, Health, and Fire Safety and Instructions

[CW Form HDU-5 RK \\*\\*](#) Relative/Kinship Foster Adoptive Home Evaluation for Environmental, Health, and Fire Safety and Instructions

### IV. REFERENCES

[Louisiana Administrative Code – Title 67, Part 5, Subpart 8, Chapter 73:7313 B.4](#)