



# Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families Department Operating Procedure

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	Version #: <b>3</b>	Revised Date: April 28, 1986 V.1 November 16, 2009 V.2	Director:   Ashley Deckert
Section: Division of Licensing and Resource Families		Title: <b>Licensing of Resource Caregiver Homes</b>	
<b>Legal Authority:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">RIGL §42-72</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">RIGL §42-72.1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">RIGL §14-1-34</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">RIGL §14-1-34</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">RIGL §40-13.2-3.1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (PL 109-248)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)</a></li> </ul>			
<b>Related DOPs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Complaints and Appeals; DOP: 100.0040</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Check; DOP: 100.0115</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Criminal Records Background Check; DOP: 100.0215</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Kinship Care; DOP: 700.0035</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Placement Determinations, Referrals, and Transitions: 700.0170</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure (214-RICR-40-00-3)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Residential Child Care Regulations for Licensure (214-RICR-40-00-4)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Child Placing Regulations (214-RICR-40-00-5)</a></li> </ul>			
<b>Related Forms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Foster Care Home Agreement (#026)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Adam Walsh Check DCYF (#035)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Foster Parent Application (#036)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Adoption &amp; Foster Care Self-Assessment Questionnaire (#036B)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Physician's Reference DCYF Form (#037)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Foster Care/Adoption Licensing Home Study (#053)</a></li> </ul>			

## I. PURPOSE

The Department strives to keep children in their own homes whenever possible. However, if the home environment is not in the child's best interest, an out-of-home

placement may be necessary to ensure the child's safety and well-being (see [DOP-700.0170: Placement Determinations, Referrals, and Transitions](#)). This procedure outlines the Department's approach to licensing out-of-home placements for children and youth in its care. For licensing residential treatment facilities, refer to the [Residential Child Care Regulations \(214-RICR-40-00-4\)](#), and for therapeutic foster homes licensed through contracted agencies, refer to the [Child Placing Regulations \(214-RICR-40-00-5\)](#).

The Department uses the same standards to license all kinship and non-relative resource families and adoptive homes, following all applicable federal and state laws.

The Department encourages individuals from all backgrounds to apply for a resource caregiver license. Licensing decisions are based on the prospective resource family's commitment to child care and their willingness to support the growth and development of children. The assessment process ensures that prospective resource families can meet the needs of children and their families. This process is standardized, collaborative, and conducted in a culturally responsive manner.

Prospective resource caregivers, including therapeutic agency homes, must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in the [Foster Care and Adoption Regulations \(214-RICR-40-00-3\)](#), provide necessary information to verify compliance, participate in the home study process, and complete foster parent training. Each licensed foster home is reevaluated and relicensed every two years to ensure ongoing compliance with required standards.

## II. TERMS DEFINED

"Home study" refers to multiple in-person meetings between a licensing worker and the prospective resource family to assess factors that may influence their ability to provide adequate care and foster healthy development. This includes evaluating:

- Motivation and expectations for providing resource family care, including interest in adoption, if applicable.
- Personal characteristics, such as adaptability, reliability, and skills in coping, communication, and problem-solving.
- Caregiving abilities and experience, particularly with children or adults with significant or complex needs.
- Willingness to provide trauma-informed care.
- Willingness to collaborate with birth parents and support a child's ongoing connection to their birth parents, siblings, relatives, peers, culture, and community.
- Willingness and ability to work as part of a team to support and facilitate permanency for children in care.
- Previous experiences with foster care, kinship care, or adoption.

"Household member" refers to any adults and children who live with the applicant or resource caregiver.

"Kinship placement" means placing a child or youth with a relative or with someone who has a significant pre-existing emotional relationship with the child, such as a godparent, family friend, neighbor, or clergy member. Kinship placements are considered a type of resource family and must meet all Department licensing requirements for out-of-home placements.

“Placement” involves placing a child in a home with someone other than a parent or guardian, or in an out-of-home residence that meets the child’s safety, therapeutic, and other needs as determined by the safety assessment and service planning.

“Primary service worker” refers to the DCYF caseworker who has the main responsibility for the child and family.

“Resource family” or “Resource caregiver” encompasses any home-based placement, including kinship placements, foster homes, and therapeutic foster homes.

“Therapeutic foster home” refers to a contracted resource family home that provides additional training or support, enabling the family to care for children with severe medical, emotional, and behavioral needs. These homes must meet all Department licensing requirements for out-of-home placements and may need to meet additional requirements set by the contracted child-placing agency.

“Variance” means an administrative decision that allows a foster or pre-adoptive home to meet a licensing standard in a different way than specified in the regulations, granted on a case-by-case basis when the licensing standard’s purpose is still achieved, and the child’s safety is maintained.

“Waiver” refers to an administrative decision that grants case-by-case exemptions from compliance with a non-safety-related standard, applicable only in child-specific placements.

### III. PROCEDURE

#### A. Recruitment of Non-Kinship Resource Families

1. Licensing workers within the Division of Licensing and Resource Families encourage prospective resource caregivers to attend an information session to help them determine if providing temporary or permanent care is right for them and their families.
2. Information sessions provide culturally responsive details on:
  - i. Eligibility requirements
  - ii. Licensing process, timeline, and requirements, including training and assessments
  - iii. Available supports and services
  - iv. Applicable fees and reimbursements
  - v. Roles, responsibilities, and necessary skills of resource caregivers
  - vi. Expectations when caring for a child
  - vii. Common needs and characteristics of children in care
  - viii. The Department’s treatment and parenting philosophies
  - ix. Next steps in the process

#### B. Recruitment of Kinship Placements

1. Applicants interested in caring for a specific child should contact the child’s primary service worker. Written approval from the primary service worker, supervisor, and administrator is required for licensing as a resource caregiver for that child.
2. If a child is already in an unlicensed kinship placement, or if placing the child in the home before licensing serves the child’s best interests, the Department may authorize the placement for up to 180 days pending licensure, as outlined in [DOP: 700.0035: Kinship Care](#).

- C. Application Process and Eligibility for Resource Family Licensure
1. The licensing worker provides the prospective applicant with information as to how to complete the application via the application portal.
  2. Upon receiving the completed application, the licensing worker ensures the following steps are completed according to the [RI Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure \(214-RICR-40-00-3\)](#):
    - i. Collection of self-reported information and documents
    - ii. Statewide and nationwide criminal records checks, including fingerprints
    - iii. DCYF agency clearance check
    - iv. At least one individual consultation with each prospective caregiver and a joint consultation for joint applicants
    - v. Age-appropriate consultations with each child and adult in or frequently in the home
    - vi. Consultations with each child or adult child of the prospective caregiver living outside the home
    - vii. At least two home visits, including a safety assessment and observation of family interactions
    - viii. Review of previous unfavorable home studies or disruptions
    - ix. References and interviews, including at least one from someone with direct knowledge of the caregiver's capacity to care for children
    - x. Home inspections, including fire and safety checks
    - xi. Completion of pre-service training requirements
  3. The licensing worker ensures statewide and nationwide criminal records checks for all adults in the home, reviews results with their supervisor if necessary, and documents the review and any decisions in the electronic case management system as a Provider Activity Note (PAN).
  4. The licensing worker completes a DCYF agency clearance check for all household members and documents the findings. Any disqualifying information is reviewed with a supervisor prior to terminating the licensing process.
  5. If the applicant or another adult in the home has lived in another state in the past five years, the licensing worker conducts an Adam Walsh Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Check in each applicable state and documents the results.
  6. The licensing worker reviews the DCYF Form #037, Physician's Reference, and contacts the physician if there are any concerns about the applicant's suitability.
  7. The licensing worker ensures receipt of personal reference letters from at least three individuals, two of whom are unrelated to the applicant.
  8. The licensing worker ensures the prospective caregiver obtains an approved safety inspection from a Department safety inspector and assesses potential concerns in the home.
  9. The licensing worker confirms that the caregiver has completed the pre-service training requirements.
  10. The licensing worker completes the foster care/adoption home study, including a home study questionnaire and home visits.
  11. The licensing worker informs the caregiver of the requirements for transporting children, including proper passenger restraint systems, vehicle maintenance, and proof of driving records and insurance, in accordance with [RI Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure \(214-RICR-40-00-3\)](#).
- D. Licensing Determinations
1. Upon completion of the licensing packet, the licensing worker submits it for supervisor approval. The licensing administrator or designee reviews the packet within 30 business days and determines:
    - i. If further assessment, documentation, or training is needed.
    - ii. The family's eligibility, suitability, and readiness to care for children.
  2. If approved, the license is prepared and sent to the newly licensed resource or kinship placement.

3. If the licensing administrator identifies concerns, they communicate with the prospective caregiver to resolve issues before finalizing the decision. If approval is not possible, the caregiver receives a written explanation and information on the appeal process.
  4. If the license is denied, the applicant is notified in writing and informed of their right to appeal. Refer to [Complaints and Appeals; DOP: 100.0040](#).
  5. The licensing information is entered into the Licensing record in the Department's electronic case management system.
- E. Ongoing Monitoring
1. A licensed resource family home study is updated within two weeks of any reported changes in the home and at least once annually.
  2. The licensing worker conducts an annual check-in with families to assess any significant changes and determine needed supports.
  3. Changes that may warrant follow-up include:
    - i. New or departing household members.
    - ii. Death or illness of a caregiver.
    - iii. Structural damage to the home.
    - iv. Legal proceedings affecting the family, such as eviction or divorce.
- F. Relicensing
1. Resource family homes are relicensed every two years. Licenses remain effective until the relicensing process is completed.
    - i. The Department's electronic case management system tracks license expiration dates and alerts the licensing worker three months before expiration.
    - ii. Department safety inspectors are notified when fire and safety inspections are due for renewal.
    - iii. A relicensing packet is sent to the caregiver three months before the license expires.
  2. The licensing worker follows up if an appointment for relicensing is not scheduled within two weeks.
  3. A new statewide criminal background check and DCYF clearance are completed for all adults in the home. Updated nationwide criminal background checks, including fingerprinting, are required only if a new adult has moved into the home who has not previously been fingerprinted, or if a household member has recently turned 18 and has not previously undergone a nationwide criminal background check.
  4. The home study is updated before the license expires, including home visits and a review of household members.
  5. The completed home study and other required documents are submitted to the licensing supervisor for approval.
  6. The licensing supervisor approves the relicense or recommends further action. The licensing administrator makes the final decision.
  7. The signed license is mailed to the resource caregiver.