TN Department of Children's Services

# POLICY

| **16.21 DCS and Contract Agency Employees as Foster Parents** | |
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| **Application:** DCS Employees and Contract Agencies | |
| **Authority:** TCA 37-5-106 | **Standards: COA**: None |
| **Commissioner:** | **Date:** |
| Original Effective Date: 12/01/00<br>Current Effective Date: 04/11/24 | Supersedes: DCS 16.21 01/01/23<br>Last Review Date: 04/11/24 |
| **Glossary:**<br>None | |

**Policy Statement:**
Department of Children's Services (DCS) and contract agency employees may apply to become foster parents. DCS recognizes that DCS staff and contract agency staff may be uniquely skilled to serve the population. Therefore, certain parameters are in place to avoid a conflict of interest.

**Purpose:**
To provide guidelines and procedures for DCS and contract agency employees who are interested in becoming foster parents.

**Procedures:**

**A. Eligibility**

1. DCS employees and contract agency employees may not serve as a foster parent for children/youth in the region where the employee works unless there is justification that the placement is in the best interest of the child. The process for providing justification and gaining approval is identified in section C of this policy.
2. Contract agency employees may not serve as a foster parent for their employer.

**B. Inquiry and Application**

DCS and contract agency employees should identify their employment at the time of inquiry or application to begin the fostering process.

**C. Training and Approval Requirements**

1. DCS and contract agency employees who apply to become a foster parent must meet minimal requirements and attend all training as outlined in DCS Policy ***16.4, Foster Home Selection and Approval.***
2. During the home study process for a DCS employee, the writer will interview the employee's supervisor to assess if the applicant can separate the roles of a foster parent and employee. This conversation and the strengths and concerns are clearly noted in the home study.
3. DCS employees are required to obtain separate training hours to satisfy staff and foster parent training requirements. Contract agency employees must consult with their employer regarding whether foster parent training hours would apply to their required employee training hours.

## D. Criteria and Placement Approval Process

1. Potential conflict of interest and the best interest of the child should be considered when determining if there is appropriate justification to place a child/youth in a DCS or contract agency employee foster home to include the following factors.
   **a)** Permanency
   **b)** Guardianship status
   **c)** Current placement status
   **d)** Relationship
   **e)** Location and line of supervision assigned to the employee and the child/youth's worker
2. The Child and Family Team should be consulted regarding placement with a DCS or contract agency employee foster home. Because of the expedited nature of placement decisions, this can be done outside of a formal Child and Family Team meeting. However, the notification must occur within one (1) business day of placement. If a team member expresses concerns, a full Child and Family Team Meeting must occur to discuss appropriateness of the placement.
3. Justification for placement is provided on form ***CS-0763, Permission to Place DCS Child in DCS Employee or Contract Agency Foster Home*** to the Regional Director for approval. Upon approval, the Regional Director forwards the recommendation to the Director of Foster Care/designee for final approval. A decision will be rendered within one (1) business day. Placement approvals needed for immediate placement should be accompanied by phone call/text message to ensure timely review.
4. All requests to place children in the foster home of a DCS or contract agency employee are tracked by Central Office Child Programs.

## E. Foster Home Documentation and Maintenance

1. When a DCS employee chooses to foster through DCS, the home is managed by a region other than the employee's region of employment. DCS staff who do not work in a regional or county office may have their home managed by a Foster Parent Support Worker in their county of residence unless another conflict of interest is identified by the Regional Director.
2. All employees who are approved foster parents follow the same policies and procedures regardless of employment position.
3. Employee applicants sign form ***CS-0748, Employee Conflict of Interest Statement*** during the home study process. Form ***CS-0748*** is maintained in the employee's foster home electronic record.

**Forms:**

***CS-0688, Foster Home Application For Parenting***

***CS-0763, Permission to Place DCS Child in DCS Employee or Contract Agency Foster Home***

***CS-0748, Employee Conflict of Interest Statement***

**Collateral Documents:**

***4.10, Conflicts of Interest***

***16.4, Foster Home Selection and Approval***