Department of Children's Services

POLICY

16.8 Responsibilities of Approved Foster Homes	
Application: DCS Foster Care and Supervisory Staff and Contract Agency Staff	
Authority: TCA § 37-5-105(3), 37-5-106, TCA 37-4-201-207; Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, T.C.A.§ 36-1-115(g)(1); Adoption and Safe Families, P.L. 105-89; Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006, P.L. 109-239, and Social Security Act; Fostering Connections To Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, P.L.100-351;Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 (HR 4980)	**Standards: COA**: PA-CFS15-16, PA-CFS23.05, PA-CFS 23.10
Commissioner:	**Date:**
Original Effective Date: 07/01/00 Current Effective Date: 04/11/24	Supersedes: DCS 16.8 03/31/23 Last Review Date: 04/11/24

Glossary:

- Driving Record Check/Moving Violation Record:
  - Each region has designated specific Foster Parent Support staff who are able to access the Moving Violation Records via an understanding with the Tennessee Department of Safety. This access provides DCS with driving records for each individual/ foster parent that provides transportation for DCS children. The report will show speeding and DUI charges and other moving violations. In an attempt to keep DCS children safe while in foster care, these reports are completed during annual re-assessments of foster homes and are also completed prior to approving a new foster home.
- Family Service Worker:
  - A DCS term used to identify the position previously known as the DCS Case Manager or Home County Case Manager. This person is principally responsible for the case and has the primary responsibility of building, preparing, supporting and maintaining the Child and Family Team as the child and family move to permanence.

Policy Statement:

All approved foster parents, including those involved with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), serve children in their home in accordance with Department of Children's Services (DCS) Policies and Procedures.

Purpose:

DCS/Contract agencies ensure that approved foster parents remain capable of providing for the safety, permanency and well-being of the children placed in their care and continue to serve children in their home in accordance with DCS Policies and Procedures.

Procedures:

A. Responsibilities of Foster Parents

1. Approved foster parent complies with all DCS policies, procedures, and concepts discussed in TN Knowledge Empowers You (TN KEY) training.
2. Approved foster parent will not petition to adopt, obtain guardianship, or file for custody of a child in care of DCS unless the child's CFT concurs with the plan and gives written approval. Non-compliance with this section may be grounds for closure of a foster home.
3. All household rules are clearly communicated to the youth and written down so that any age-appropriate child can read and understand. The structured daily household routine provided for the youth may include:
   - Clear and concise household rules;

- Identified acceptable and unacceptable behavior; and
- Possible consequences for unacceptable behavior.

4. Foster parent ensures proper supervision of children in their care. Decision making regarding participation in outings, overnight stays, and extended travel are made using reasonable and prudent parenting (see Section H) and guidelines provided in the ***Protocol for Respite and Other Events***. Foster parents are mindful of the unique needs of children that have experienced severe trauma, such as child exploitation. Refer to ***Safety Notice: Creating Safe Environments for Youth Survivors of Exploitation.***
5. Foster parent provides notification within one (1) business day to the Foster Parent Support (FPS)/Contract agency staff of any significant changes in the home (i.e., new address, additional persons living in the household, health, income, etc.). **Failure to report any significant changes could affect the status of the foster home and may result in termination of foster care board payments and/or an overpayment assessment.**
6. If a child runs away from the foster home, the foster parent will immediately notify the Family Service Worker (FSW) to ensure the information needed to complete form ***CS-0705, Absconder Recovery Runaway/Escapee Checklist***.
7. Foster parent must allow the DCS/Contract agency staff to complete required foster home visits. Refer to the ***Visitation Guide*** for visitation requirements. FPS staff visit foster homes to assess safety and well-being of foster parent, children's well-being and permanency, identifying any ***Support to Foster Parents Protocol*** providing support to avoid placement disruption and retain foster homes. Form ***CS-0709, Foster Home Monthly Visit Checklist*** should be discussed at each visit and case notes recorded in TFACTS monthly in the foster home record. Contract agencies may use an equivalent form to ***CS0709, Foster Home Monthly Visit Checklist*** for documenting monthly foster home visits.

B. Health Needs

1. The child's health needs are monitored and arrangements are made to receive routine medical, dental, mental or behavioral treatment after discussing these needs with the FSW or within the context of a Child and Family Team meeting. Appointments are made in accordance with DCS Policies ***20.12, Dental Services*** and ***20.7, Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis, and Treatment Standards (EPSDT)***. In a medical emergency, the foster parents **immediately** obtain emergency assistance for the youth and notify the FSW/Contract agency or FPS staff as soon as possible.

2. Foster parent ensures that each child's nutritional needs are met and are encouraged to provide well-balanced meals. Families are also encouraged to accommodate the child's cultural norms when planning menus.
3. At doctor appointments, foster parent requests that the service provider complete form ***CS-0689, Health Services Confirmation and Follow-up***. If received from the provider, the foster parent gives a copy to the FSW.
4. Foster parent follows all doctor orders for each child in their care and make no changes in a child's treatment unless approved by the physician.
5. Foster parent maintains form ***CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record*** for each child placed in their care and prescribed medication. The medication record is updated on a daily basis or as necessary according to the prescription and provided to the child's FSW each month. In ICPC cases, a copy of the form ***CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record*** becomes part of the Quarterly Progress report filed by the TN DCS FSW/ ICPC Worker.
6. Children who require hospitalization are expected to return to their foster homes once released by medical staff. The foster parents maintain follow-up care as directed by the treating physician.
7. All household members (adults and children) must have up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) and influenza vaccines to foster children under the age of eighteen (18) months old or with significant documented medical needs. Foster parents may request exemption from this requirement on the basis of religious or moral convictions. To request exemption, the foster parent completes ***CS-4256, Vaccine Exception Declaration for Foster Parents*** (pending) and provides the document to their Foster Parent Support (FPS) worker or contract agency provider, who ensures the document is scanned into TFACTS in the documents section of the foster parent's person home page.

   Note: Flu season is considered active during the months of October through March. Therefore, all household members are expected to obtain the influenza vaccine as close to the beginning of this timeframe as possible.

C. Clothing and Allowance

Adequate clothing, as well as a personal allowance, is to be provided from the foster home board payment as outlined in DCS Policy, ***16.29, Foster Home Board Rates*** and the ***Protocol for Clothing and Allowance***.

D. Education

1. All school-age children:

a) Are enrolled in an accredited school setting;
b) Attend school daily;
c) Have their attendance monitored; and,
d) Have their education needs met in accordance with DCS Policy ***21.14, Serving the Educational Needs of the Child/Youth***.

2. The biological/legal parent, foster parent, and FSW discuss any problems regarding the child's schoolwork with school personnel.
3. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all multi-disciplinary team (M-Team) meetings, Individual Education Plan (IEP) development meetings as well as other school-related meetings for the children in their care.
4. Non-traditional school program enrollment may only be approved as outlined in DCS Policy ***21.14, Serving the Educational Needs of the Child/Youth***.
5. Children in DCS custody who have earned a high school diploma or Hi Set have their vocational and/or post-secondary educational interests addressed in the ***Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide***.
6. In ICPC cases, the "sending state" shall continue to have case planning responsibility and financial responsibility for the child's educational needs. The "receiving state" is not responsible for costs of these services.

E. Discipline

1. Foster parent strives to maintain appropriate discipline of the child by correcting the child's behavior when necessary and discussing any problems with the FSW in collaboration with FPS staff/Contract agency staff.
2. Foster parent and all staff responsible for the care of children in DCS custody, adhere to the guidelines outlined in DCS Policy ***19.12, Behavioral Management***.
3. All consequences are to be age-appropriate and timely. In accordance with DCS form CS-0553, Discipline Policy, the following forms of discipline are not used with children in DCS custody:
    - Corporal punishment such as slapping, spanking, or hitting with any object;
    - Excessive exercising (particularly of a military nature) such as running laps or repetitive sit-ups;
    - Cruel and unusual punishment;
    - Assignment of excessive or inappropriate work;
    - Denial of meals and daily needs;
    - Verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation;
    - Permitting one child to punish another child;
    - Chemical or mechanical restraints such as use of psychotropic medications to subdue a child;

- Denial of planned visits, telephone calls or mail contact with birth family, attorney, siblings, FSW, or pre-adoptive family;
- Seclusion as a punishment;
- Threat of removal from the foster home.

4. In ICPC cases, the discipline policies of both the "sending state" and the "receiving state" are practiced by the approved foster parent to support the safety and well-being of the child.

F. Routine Transportation

1. Routine travel is included in the foster home board rate and is an expectation of a foster parent. At times, frequent transportation may be required for things such as multiple appointments, alternative school, etc. If an unusual amount of transportation is required for one particular child, the CFT will discuss the responsibilities of each team member in assisting with transportation.
2. Requests can be made for reimbursement to the foster parent when a child's needs require support outside the daily expectations. Refer to the ***Protocol for Routine Transportation*** in regard to the steps for obtaining approval for situations considered reimbursable.

G. Extra-Curricular Activities

The child's extracurricular activities are encouraged and monitored. The actions associated with this monitoring and oversight include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The FSW attempts to discuss and obtain the consent of birth parents when special activities arise for children. Form ***CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Child-Specific Information from DCS and Contract Service Providers*** is provided to the parents and completed during these conversations. However, DCS may give consent or authorize the foster parents to give permission for special activities.
2. Foster parents consider the youth's age and developmental level and assist in making developmentally appropriate choices in choosing extracurricular activities.
3. Information regarding a youth's activities is regularly communicated with birth family members by the FSW and/or foster parent.
4. Refer to DCS Policy ***1.15, News Media Relations for DCS Regional Offices and a Youth Development Center, Section F,*** items 1-4 regarding interviews or photos of child in DCS custody.

H. Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

Through thoughtful decision-making, foster parents support the child's health, safety and best interest while encouraging the child's emotional and developmental growth through the following activities: extracurricular, cultural, enrichment and social activities. Such activities promote "normalcy" which promotes well-being for all children in care. Refer to the ***Protocol for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting*** for additional guidance on activities and opportunities for children in foster care.

I. Religion

Foster families make accommodations for children to participate in the religion or faith of their choice dependent on the child's wishes.

J. Case Planning Participation

Foster parent and the CFT are vital partners to the Department. Foster parent consistently participate in case planning by:

- Attending and participating as an active member in the CFT process;
- Providing input to case decisions and permanency plans; and
- Supporting the implementation of those plans.

K. Shared Parenting

Foster parent share planning and caring for children with members of the CFT, including the birth parents, DCS, and contract agencies.

1. When parental rights are intact, shared parenting takes place through direct contact with the birth family, unless otherwise indicated by a decision of the CFT.
2. Foster parents assist the child's FSW and actively support the quality visitation plan outlined in the youth's permanency plan.
3. If parental rights have been terminated or surrendered, foster parent acknowledges and respects the child's feelings about the birth family and demonstrates this through their parenting.

L. Life Book Maintenance

1. Children in DCS custody have a life storybook to document and preserve their history during the time they are in DCS custody. "Life Books" are constructed and maintained to help children understand their current situation as well as help them process the feelings they may have around significant life events.
2. The FSW assists the foster parent in creating and maintaining Life Books for all children placed in their home (refer to ***Guidelines For Life Story Books***).

3. The FSW/contract agency staff assists foster parent with access to basic Life Book supplies. Staff consult with their TL regarding the manner in which to acquire these supplies. Each region establishes a process for the procurement of Life Book supplies and ensures that information regarding access to the supplies is communicated to TL.
4. The Life Book is the property of the child and travels with the child any time there is a placement change.

M. Mandatory In-Service Training for Foster Parents

For mandatory in-service training information, refer to Policy ***16.9, Required Foster Parent In-Service Training*.**

N. Foster Home Addendum Requirements

1. Foster parents are to notify FPS/Contract agency staff of any significant changes to their home within one (1) business day. In addition to self-reporting, the FPS/Contract agency worker assesses the need for an addendum to the foster home study during each home visit.
2. An addendum to the home study is completed within fourteen (14) business days of notice that there has been any significant change in the family (see form ***CS-0773, Foster Home Addendum***). These changes may include, but are not limited to, a change in the number/type of children for which the family is approved, a change in address, or the addition of household members/significant others entering the home. The addendum is approved by the TL/contract agency supervisory staff and entered in TFACTS.
3. The following checks are required for a new adult household member who will reside in the foster home for more than fourteen (14) calendar days:
   a) Internet Record Clearance checks are completed the first business day after the new adult household member entered the foster home. A complete local criminal background check is initiated the first business day after the new adult household member entered the foster home and completed with results within fourteen (14) calendar days. This includes all adults residing on the foster parent's property (main residence, detached apartment, garage, trailers, etc.). This includes a search of all legal residences within the last six (6) months.
   b) A complete local criminal background check is initiated the first business day after the new adult household member entered the foster home and completed within fourteen (14) calendar days. This will include all adults residing on the foster parent's property (main residence, detached apartment, garage, trailers, etc.) and a search of all legal residences within the last six (6) months.

c) DCS Records checks are completed within fourteen (14) calendar days after the new adult household member entered the foster home.

d) Fingerprinting is arranged within fourteen (14) calendar days after the new adult household member entered the foster home. Verification of fingerprint scheduling is provided if the fingerprint result is dated beyond fourteen (14) calendar days.

Note: Criminal history checks should not be dated more than ninety (90) days prior to effective move-in date.

4. Foster homes that have new adults residing in the home who have not had a criminal history check as outlined in this section may not be paid and run the risk of a possible overpayment assessment.

5. All new household members provide a medical report from a licensed physician (refer to DCS Policy ***16.4, Foster Home Selection and Approval,*** Section E, item 6).

6. For new household members that become foster co-parents, an addendum to the home study should include all required sections/narratives that apply to a co-parent. Refer to ***Documentation of the Foster Family Home Study.***

7. All adult household members or significant others (paramours, fiancés, or partners) that have regular access to the children placed in the home and provide a significant parental role (which may include routine childcare, transportation, discipline, or other support to children) must enroll within thirty (30) days of entering the home and complete TN KEY training.

Note: Young adults who turn eighteen (18) years old while residing in the foster home, who have remained a household member since their birthday, do not apply to this section. They will have background checks completed during the family's foster home reassessment.

O. Foster Homes Re-Assessments and Home Evaluations

1. All DCS or contract agency foster homes, are re-assessed no less than biennially (every two years from the date of initial approval). Approval periods remain the same biennially unless extenuating circumstances arise in which the foster home requires a new approval period. A foster home's approval period is considered lapsed when the re-assessment due date is not met. A foster home defaults to an "Unapproved" status if the home remains unapproved for thirty (30) consecutive days **after** its re-assessment due date. Any foster home which remains in "Unapproved" status **after** thirty (30) consecutive days is considered inactive effective the 31st day and **all** new criminal background checks are to be obtained (refer to DCS Policy ***16.4, Foster Home Selection and Approval***, Section J). A foster

home's approval date will change based on the date that the re-assessment of the foster home was completed and approved. The home retains an active eligibility status for two (2) years from the date the home was approved/reassessed.

2. If the re-assessment due date has lapsed, a paper addendum explaining the reason the approval due date was not met timely is required. The paper addendum is also included with the approval documentation. Team Coordinator and Regional Director signatures are obtained for this document. For contract agency foster homes, equivalent title signatures are obtained.
3. Refer to DCS Policy ***16.36, Title IV-E Foster Care Funds***, to determine the period of eligibility/reimbursability of any foster home or childcare institution.
4. Documentation for foster home approval is not dated older than ninety (90) days from the approval due date.
5. The reassessment process consists of:
   - **a)** A home visit by the FPS or contract agency staff;
   - **b)** Completion of form ***CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO or FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release;***
   - **c)** New background checks must be completed on any adult living in the home, except young adults who are being served through Extension of Foster Care (EFC) or young adults who are adjudicated delinquent and remain in foster care. Results from all background checks are documented on form ***CS-0687, Background Check and IV-E Eligibility Checklist***. The required checks for reassessment include those listed in sections d) and e) below along with a DCS records check.
     - ♦ DCS/contract agency foster parent, and any other adult residing in the home, will report any arrest indictment or criminal conviction of any criminal offense (either misdemeanor or felony) immediately to their FPS/contract agency worker.
   - **d)** A local criminal history check for all adult household members.
     - ♦ Any charges identified from this search for which there is no disposition (misdemeanor or felony) will be clarified by obtaining additional documentation from the court of jurisdiction.
     - ♦ If during the course of gathering this information any new criminal charges are found that require a waiver, refer to ***CS0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre and In-Service, Non-Safety Issues, CPS Substantiations and Education Requirements.***
       In situations where there is a pending felony, Central Office is consulted regarding continued eligibility and viability of the placement resource.
     - ♦ Misdemeanor convictions, unless related to child safety or domestic assault or domestic violence, do not require a waiver (Refer to the ***Waiver Tip Sheet***

for Employment, Volunteering and Custodial Placements). However, such offenses are considered when assessing safety risk associated with foster parent responsibility.

e) An Internet Records Clearance, with documentation that includes the following:

- ***National Sexual Offender Registry***
- ***Tennessee Department of Health Abuse Registry Clearance***
- Each criminal history records check is to be completed in accordance with policy to ensure timely assessment of foster homes. However, to allow for human error, it is permissible to rectify errors (i.e. incorrect name spelling, DOB, SSN) on such checks. Newly conducted checks that show no results are considered compliant. Checks that show convictions or substantiations of abuse or neglect within the findings that would exclude the applicant from becoming an approved foster home or approved household member as outlined below are deemed non-compliant.
- Any contract agency using an internet service to complete the required background checks for adult household members is responsible for assuring that such provider accesses the internet searches listed above. Doing so will preclude the need for the provider to complete each individual internet search. Failure to verify that the chosen internet service uses the exact sites listed above for each check results in that check being considered invalid. This may cause a home to be identified as noncompliant and result in monetary penalties.

f) Verification of a valid driver's license, current vehicle registration, vehicle liability insurance, and a Driving Record Check/ Moving Violation Record. Check for each foster parent or other household member approved to transport a child is required.

g) Review and completion of form ***CS-0553, Discipline Policy*** with new signature by the foster parent.

h) Review and completion of form ***CS-0670, Foster Parent Oath to Abide*** with new signature by the foster parent.

i) Review and completion of form ***CS-0431, Monthly Family Financial Income and Expenditures*** and collection of income verification documentation.

j) An updated medical report, from either six (6) months prior or six (6) months post re-assessment, using form ***CS-0678, Foster Parent/Other Adult Medical Report***, is required to be completed by a licensed physician, nurse practitioner or equivalent health care professional documenting acceptable physical and emotional health for all foster parents. All other household members are required to complete form ***CS0707, Medical Self-Report***.

k) When a foster parent or other adult household member has been prescribed or a change in medication has occurred, form ***CS-0707, Medical Self-Report*** is

completed to document the changes. Refer to the ***Protocol for Drug and Medication Expectations for Approved Foster Homes*** and the ***Controlled Substance and Medication Work Aid.***

l) Completion of forms ***CS-0676, Home Safety Checklist and CS-0871, Foster Home Disaster Plan.***

m) Completion of form ***CS-0699, HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices - Client Acknowledgement.***

n) FPS staff ensures the foster home section of TFACTS is current.

o) Complete form ***CS-0692, Foster Home Assessment or Re-Activation*** with the foster parents. The TL or contract agency supervisor signature confirms the approval or denial of the assessment. The foster home disposition information is entered into TFACTS

p) The FPS staff completes a new form ***CS-0702, Foster Home Approval*** for all families who remain in good standing, following their biennial re-assessment.

6. Once the above requirements are met, the approved foster family is permitted to continue to accept placements for kinship care, foster care, or adoption.

7. FPS staff complete an anniversary assessment within one (1) month of the approval anniversary during the years the biennial re-assessment is not required.

- The anniversary assessment process consist of:
  - A home visit by the FPS or contract agency staff;
  - Completion of form ***CS-0676, Home Safety Checklist***;
  - ***CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO or FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release***
  - Completion of form ***CS-0692, Foster Home Assessment or Reactivation***; and
  - Completion of a Case Process Review by a supervisor or peer review: ***https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/fh_reassessment_review.***

8. FPS staff documents the anniversary evaluation in the foster home case recording and ensures the foster home record is current.

9. A discussion regarding training requirements, updating verification documents (insurance, vaccinations, etc.) and changes in foster family medications are to occur monthly.

P. Case Transfer

During the course of application, home study, or tenure of a DCS foster home, any change of circumstance that triggers a move of that home to another agency, county or

region, follows DCS Policy ***31.3, Case Transfer Guidelines Between Regions, Agencies, and Facilities.***

Q. Resource Eligibility Teams (RET)

In order to ensure that Federal IV-E safety requirements are met for funding purposes, the Resource Eligibility Team (RET) reviews the documentation used to support the foster home approval decision. Safety documents for contract agency and DCS foster homes are uploaded in TFACTS and attached to the foster home's current assessment. (Refer to the ***Protocol for Resource Eligibility Team (RET)***).

Forms:

CS-0431, Monthly Family Income & Expenditures

CS-0871, Foster Home Disaster Plan

CS-0553, Discipline Policy

CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record

CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO or FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release

CS-0676, Home Safety Checklist

CS-0670, Foster Parent Oath To Abide

CS-0678, Foster Parent/Other Adult Medical Report (if Applicable)

CS-0687, Background Check History and IV-E Eligibility Checklist

CS-0689, Health Services Confirmation and Follow Up Notification

CS-0692, Foster Home Assessment or Re-Activation

CS-0699, HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices - Client Acknowledgement

CS-0702, Foster Home Approval

CS-0705, Absconder/Runaway/Escapee Recovery Checklist, Part A (if Applicable)

CS-0707, Medical Self-Report

CS-0709, Foster Home Monthly Visit Checklist

CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement and Well-Being Information and History

CS-0773, Foster Home Addendum

CS-0871, Foster Home Disaster Plan

CS-0909, Foster Home Performance Improvement Plan

CS-0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre and In-Service, Non-Safety Issues, CPS Substantiations and Education Requirements

CS-1012, ADOPTUSKIDS Registration

CS-0962, Foster Parent Applicant Questionnaire

CS-1000 Foster Parent Elective Training Documentation

CS-4256, Vaccine Exception Declaration for Foster Parents

FA-0080, Claim for Travel Expenses

Note: Contract agencies may use equivalent forms, provided the content of the forms capture the content of the forms listed above.

Collateral Documents:

16.9, Required Foster Parent In-Service Training

Attachment-Guidelines For Life Story Books

Attachment-Guidelines for Foster Care Associations

Community Risk Assessment (When Applicable)

Documentation of the Foster Family Home Study.

Foster Parent Handbook

Local Police Check Results

Proof of all Reported Income

Protocol for Drug and Medication Expectations for Approved Foster Homes

Controlled Substance and Medication Work Aid

Protocol for Clothing and Allowance

Protocol for Re-Activation or Re-Classification of Resource Homes

Protocol for Routine Transportation

Protocol for Resource Eligibility Team (RET)

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Practice and Procedure Manual

31.3, Case Transfer Guidelines Between Regions, Agencies, and Facilities

Visitation Guide

Protocol for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

Attachment Nine: Required Foster Parent Training Chart

Protocol for Respite and Other Events

Safety Notice: Creating Safe Environments for Youth Survivors of Exploitation

Waiver Tip Sheet for Employment, Volunteering and Custodial Placements

Support to Foster Parents Protocol