

Documentation of the Relative/Kinship Home Study

Tennessee Department of Children's Services| Child Permanency| March 2024

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THE RELATIVE/KINSHIP FOSTER HOME STUDY PROCESS

The home study process involves case managers engaging relatives and kin who are considered for placement of a child in foster care assessing both strengths and underlying needs to resolve barriers that may prevent placement and make recommendations regarding safe and stable placement. The home study process:

- Is family centered, strength-based, and culturally responsive;
- Leads to a shared understanding between the agency and relative/kinship foster parents;
- Identifies family strengths and solutions;
- Identifies signs of safety and seeks to resolve signs of risk; and,
- Provides education regarding the fostering process and requirements.

Once a potential relative or kinship placement is identified, the case manager reviews the *Guide to Full Disclosure of Permanency Options* with the family. If the family chooses to become a relative/kinship foster home, the case manager will begin the home study process by visiting the home and interviewing all individuals who reside in the home. Form *CS-4254 Relative/Kinship Home Study* is a tool that guides the case manager through the assessment of the home and family. The information gained in the assessment process is documented on the form to provide a clear picture of the family's circumstances to justify approval decisions of placement with relatives or kin. Case managers should not feel limited to asking only the questions on the *Relative/Kinship Home Study, CS-4254* form. Case managers are encouraged to ask any question that might provide a more accurate and detailed picture in fully assessing the family's situation.

NARRATIVE GUIDE FOR HOME STUDY COMPLETION

The requirements for completing the home study are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list of topics that may be included when conducting an assessment that is individualized based on the family's specific situation in a home study.

A. Caregiver Assessment

Provide a detailed response to each question avoiding one word or sentence responses. As an assessor, follow up questions should build upon responses ensuring a complete understanding of the caregiver and home environment.

- Describe the caregiver's understanding of the current situation and their reason/motivation to become a relative/kinship foster parent. Can the caregiver commit to the long-term care of the child? **If residing in government housing, written confirmation from the Housing Authority must be provided to complete the home approval process to ensure the applicant's eligibility for housing is not affected if allowed to foster**.
- Describe the relationship between the caregiver and the child and family not only by title (granddaughter, nephew, student, etc.) but also the duration of relationship, if they have cared for the child in the past, how often they engaged the child and family prior to this event. What is the status of the relationship with the child's birth parents?

- Assess the caregiver's understanding of the child's physical, emotional, and educational/vocational needs and document their ability to meet those needs and any concern the caregiver has about meeting those needs. Provide a copy of the child's *form* ***CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement and Well-Being Information and History*** and review the details with the family.
- Include what resources DCS can provide to alleviate identified concerns and/or increase safety.
- Document how the family will address childcare and supervision of the child, especially if they work outside the home. Will they need assistance with transportation?
- Document the caregiver's support system and how they will be utilized. Do these individuals live in proximity to the caregiver? Will it be emotional support only? If no supports are identified, how will this impact the caregiver's ability to care for the child if any?
- Document how the caregiver will ensure their own self-care as a relative/kinship foster parent? A plan must be developed and documented. It can be as simple as having a regular date night, a mommy's day out or having someone babysit a couple of hours so they can have free time away from the child. Helping families understand that it is okay to need and ask for help when needed will help support stable placements.
- Help the caregiver identify a contingency plan for emergency situations, using their support systems. Document a name, address, and phone number for person(s) identified to assist the caregiver family.
- Document any health/medical issues of the caregiver and other household members. List all prescribed/over the counter medications including dosage, and frequency. State specifically if a medication is a controlled substance. Discuss the ***Protocol for Drug and Medication Expectations for Approved Foster Homes*** including warnings for usage of CBD products causing positive drug screens and how it can impact the child's placement. When applicable, discuss with caregiver the child's need for prescribed medication to ensure they are comfortable administering said medication. If so, explain the medication management tracking form ***CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record*** to be used by the caregiver.
- Document any household member's past or present mental health services/treatment including hospitalizations noting dates and length of service. Based on conversation and what is known about the child's behavior/mental health status, assess for any potential barriers to placement and/or discuss and document any concerns of caregiver.
- Document all household members ability/willingness to receive an annual flu shot and pertussis vaccination if the child is under the age of 18 months.
- Discuss and document the results of the criminal background check for each adult household member. If the household member has a prior history, document the circumstances, the caregiver's actions, and learned lessons from each experience. Obtain waivers when applicable.

B. Home Safety Assessment and References

The homes safety assessment portion of the study seeks to identify and resolve physical safety issues within the home. Answer each safety measure with "Yes" or "No". If a "No" is determined for a safety measure, answer the question, "What is needed to support the family"? The answers provided should not be used to automatically disqualify, but rather provide an opportunity to partner with the caregiver to resolve safety issues that may be a barrier to placement. Pay special attention to adherence to guns and ammunition, fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and pool safety requirements.

Personal references provide additional knowledge regarding the caregiver. Obtain from the caregiver two references (name, address, phone number and relationship) to contact regarding their knowledge of

the caretaker's skills and abilities as a parent. Document responses summarizing the strengths and concerns identified by the references.

A section is available for additional items identified or discussed during the home study process.

Placement Recommendation

The case manager will document their recommendation for approval or denial based on the outcome of the complete assessment of the caregiver family, criminal background check, home environment, and references. The reason(s) for approval or denial will be explained in this section noting specific concerns or items to be addressed prior to placement.

The recommendation will be approved by the signature of the case manager's supervisor, team coordinator and regional director/designee.

Verifying Discussions

Discussed with Caregiver are topics which must be covered during the interview process to ensure caregiver understanding and avoid future issues with the placement and possible disruption. Once discussed, have the caregiver initial next to the topic on the form ***CS-4254, Relative/Kinship Home Study*** form.

Medication Tracking - Children who take prescribed medication must have their medication administration tracked on form ***CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record***. Provide the caregiver a copy of the form and explain instructions.

Foster Care Board Rate - Share with the caregiver that upon approval they will qualify for a foster care board rate. Briefly explain the payment process when assisting with the completion of the W9 by covering the below points:

- W9 establishes Caregiver as a vendor for payment;
- Child's placement will be linked to your home once entered in system;
- Contract uploaded and authorized by fiscal;
- Caregiver will verify payments in system;
- Payments occur on the 15th and last day of month;
- Timeframe to expect first payment is 4 weeks to 6 weeks; and,
- Assigned FPS will provide further details.

TCA 37-2-414(e) Violation of Court Ordered Visitation Restrictions- state statute imposes a penalty for relative/kinship caregivers who violate court ordered visitation restrictions. A summary of the statute is to be read to the caregiver, ensure understanding, and answer any questions. Provide a copy of the court order to the caregiver when applicable.

"It is an offense for a foster parent from a kinship placement to knowingly allow a child in the foster parent's care to visit with the child's parent if the foster parent had knowledge of a current court order prohibiting the parent from visiting with the child. (B) A

first violation of subdivision (e)(2)(A) is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine only. (C) A second or subsequent violation of subdivision (e)(2)(A) is a Class B misdemeanor".

DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND POLICY

Documents to Leave with Caregiver:

Guide to Full Disclosure of Permanency Options

Protocol for Drug and Medication Expectations for Approved Foster Homes

CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record

CS-0565, Daily Rate Child Placement Contract DCS

Court Order Restricting Visitation with Birth Parents/Others

Forms:

CS-0553, Discipline Policy

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

CS-0750, Background Criminal History- Expedited/Emergency Purpose Code X III Name Check

CS-0670, Foster Parent Oath to Abide

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

CS-0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre- and In-Service Training Modifications, Non Safety Issue and CPS Indications

CS-0565, Daily Rate Child Placement Contract DCS

CS-0630, Foster Home Prescription Medication Record

CS-0660, Full Disclosure Statement: Permanency Options for Relative or Kin Caregivers

CS-0691, Fingerprint Card Information

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

CS-4254, Relative/Kinship Home Study

DCS Policies:

16.20, Custodial Relative/Kinship Foster Home Approval