



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

DATE: April 18, 2019

TO: Regional Managing Directors
Community-Based Care Lead Agency CEOs
Sheriff's Offices Conducting Child Protective Investigations

THROUGH: Patricia Babcock, Deputy Secretary *Patricia Babcock*

FROM: *Patricia Babcock for* JoShonda Guerrier, Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare

SUBJECT: CFOP 170-11, Chapter 16, Levels of Licensure

PURPOSE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide notification that CFOP 170-11, Placement, has been updated with the addition of Chapter 16, Levels of Licensure, which has been finalized.

BACKGROUND: The new CFOP 170-11, Chapter 16, Levels of Licensure, has been developed to align with s. 409.175, Florida Statutes. To further align with statutory changes related to the levels of licensure, policy guidance is being provided while the administrative rule is being promulgated. Additional policy guidance will assist in standardizing the procedures for program requirements and maintaining data integrity. Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) has new functionality, effective with the April 12, 2019 build, to support the new licensure system.

This new chapter includes information regarding licensing requirements for all levels of licensure, assessments for over-capacity requests, and requirements that can be waived for Level I licenses. In addition, the new chapter clarifies background screening requirements for initial licensing, relicensure, and 3-year licenses.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please share this memorandum and the new CFOP 170-11, Chapter 16, Levels of Licensure with all appropriate staff in the regions, circuits, Community-Based Care Lead Agencies, case management organizations, and sheriff offices conducting child protective investigations.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have questions or need clarification regarding this memorandum or the new CFOP chapter, please contact Teanna Houston, Foster Home Licensing Specialist, at Teanna.Houston@myflfamilies.com or 850-717-4203.

cc: Regional Family and Community Services Directors
Center for Child Welfare

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Mission: Work in Partnership with Local Communities to Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

Chapter 16

LEVELS OF LICENSURE

16-1. Purpose. This chapter outlines policies for s. [409.175](#), F.S., pertaining to Levels of Licensure and supplements Chapter [65C-13](#), F.A.C., entitled Foster Care Licensing.

16-2. Legal Authority.

a. Federal statutes, regulations, and policy statements.

b. State statutes, administrative rules and plans:

(1) Section [409.145](#), F.S.

(2) Section [409.175](#), F.S.

(3) Section [39.01](#), F.S.

(4) Chapter [65C-13](#), F.A.C.

16-3. Background Screening Requirements for All Levels of Licensure.

a. The Department shall conduct background screenings for all persons considered by the Department for initial licensure, re-licensure, or re-screenings for 3-year licensure for out-of-home caregivers and all adult household members age 18 and older, pursuant to ss. [409.175](#) and [39.0138](#), F.S.

b. The screenings conducted pursuant to paragraph 16-3a above shall include:

(1) Statewide criminal records check through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to be obtained through fingerprinting.

(2) Federal criminal records check through the Federal Bureau of Investigation to be obtained through fingerprinting.

(3) Local criminal record checks through local law enforcement agencies, including records of any responses to the home by law enforcement that did not result in criminal charges.

(4) Records checks of the Florida Sexual Offenders and Predators registry.

(5) Abuse and neglect records checks through the Department's Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN).

(a) Only abuse and neglect reports in which the applicant or any other household member was named as the caregiver responsible for the abuse or neglect shall be used for initial licensing decisions.

(b) However, if the applicant or any other household member was named in any capacity in three or more reports during a five year period, regardless of classification, those reports shall be reviewed by the Department for determining whether a license shall be issued.

(c) For homes being considered for licensure for longer than one year under s. [409.175\(6\)\(i\)](#), F.S., all abuse reports with any findings shall be considered.

(d) Determinations made on the basis of abuse and neglect reports shall be made in accordance with the standards set forth in Rule [65C-38.002](#), F.A.C.

(6) Civil court records check regarding domestic violence complaints and orders of protection.

(7) If the applicant or any other adult household member has resided in any other state during the past five years, requests for abuse and neglect histories from those states and the results of such requests shall be included with the application file.

c. Each applicant and adult household member being screened pursuant to paragraph 16-3a above shall sign an Affidavit of Good Moral Character (form CF [1649](#), available in DCF Forms) and a Release of Information (form CF-FSP [5090](#), available in DCF Forms).

d. Each applicant and household member being screened pursuant to paragraph 16-3a above shall provide all the names under which he or she has been known.

e. The following screenings shall be completed for household members 12-17 years of age:

(1) Juvenile records check through the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice for household members ages 12-17 years old;

(2) Abuse and neglect records checks through FSFN.

(a) Only abuse and neglect reports in which the applicant or any other household member was named as the caregiver responsible for the abuse or neglect shall be used for initial licensing decisions.

(b) However, if the applicant or any other household member was named in any capacity in three or more reports during a five year period, regardless of classification, those reports shall be reviewed by the Department for determining whether a license shall be issued.

(c) For homes being considered for licensure for longer than one year under s. [409.175\(6\)\(i\)](#), F.S., all abuse reports with any findings shall be considered.

(d) Determinations made on the basis of abuse and neglect reports shall be the made in accordance with the standards set forth in rule [65C-38.002](#), F.A.C.

f. When the individual who is being screened is a former dependent child under 23 years of age and the security background screening reveals a disqualifying offense which was committed during or prior to the time that the child was dependent, that offense shall not automatically affect the licensure of the out-of-home caregivers. Exemptions for disqualifying offenses under s. [435.07](#), F.S., may be sought.

g. All records obtained as a part of the background screening shall be considered in the process of determining whether to issue a foster care license or, if there is a current license, whether the license should be revoked. Such records shall include findings of delinquency; any misdemeanor or felony criminal arrests resulting in a conviction or withholding of adjudication; any criminal traffic offenses resulting in a conviction or withholding of adjudication; and, any civil cases of domestic violence and orders for protection. Crimes perpetrated in other states that are misdemeanors in that state but would be felonies listed under s. [435.04](#), F.S., if committed in Florida shall be considered as disqualifying offenses by the Department for licensing decisions. Crimes identified as disqualifying offenses under s. [39.0138](#), F.S., are automatically disqualifying for licensure.

h. Screenings identified in Rule 65C-45.001(2)(a-b), F.A.C., are valid for five years. Screenings identified in Rules 65C-45.001(2)(c-f) and 65C-45.001(6)(a-b), F.A.C., are valid for 1 year. All screenings must be valid within 60 days of re-licensure or re-screening for three-year licensure.

i. Fingerprint exemptions as referenced in s. [39.0138](#), F.S., can be granted if the criteria in Rule [65C-28.020](#), F.A.C., are met.

16-4. Parent Preparation Pre-Service and In-Service Training for All Levels of Licensure.

a. Parent preparation pre-service and in-service training shall meet the requirements of s. [409.175\(14\)\(b\)](#), F.S.

b. Applicants who have previously completed a departmentally approved pre-service training curriculum in the past five years, and who can provide proof of completion, shall not be required to complete pre-service training except portions of the training curriculum that have been updated since their completion.

(1) Applicants who completed pre-service training in another state shall be exempt from pre-service training if the curriculum meets the content requirements established in s. [409.175](#), F.S., for pre-service training offered in Florida.

(2) Supervising agencies shall submit a copy of the curriculum to the Regional Licensing Authority for review and approval if the previously completed training is not an approved curriculum in Florida.

(3) The Regional Licensing Authority shall approve training curriculum that meets the required hours and content requirements specified in ss. [409.175\(14\)\(b\)1.-7.](#), F.S.

c. Pre-service training shall include the following:

(1) The reasonable and prudent parenting standards, pursuant to ss. [39.4091](#) and [409.145](#), F.S., and the balance of normalcy for children in care and their safety;

(2) Legal rights, roles, responsibilities and expectations of foster parents;

(3) The social and emotional development of children and youth;

(4) Agency policies, services, laws and regulations;

(5) Development of life skills for teens in care;

(6) The caregiver's role in supporting and promoting the educational progress of the child;

(7) Trauma-informed care including recognizing the signs, symptoms, and triggers of trauma;

(8) The Multiethnic Placement Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act; and,

(9) The administration of psychotropic medication including the use of psychotropic medications to treat children, the proper dosage of medication, the importance of monitoring for possible side effects, and timely reporting of side effects and adverse reactions. Training on psychotropic medications shall also include an overview of s. [39.407](#), F.S., and Chapter [65C-35](#), F.A.C., which govern the administration of psychotropic medication.

d. In-service training shall include the following:

(1) In-service must be completed annually prior to re-licensure.

(2) Types of in-service training shall be based upon the needs of the family and any previous or current children in the home.

e. Each parent preparation pre-service training class shall be led by a child protection professional certified pursuant to s. [402.40](#), F.S., who has a bachelor's degree or a master's degree from an accredited college or university, and who also successfully has met any curriculum-specific requirements to train the Department approved parent preparation pre-service training curriculum.

(1) An online training approved by the Department may also be provided.

(2) The Department shall review all parent preparation pre-service training curriculum to ensure that the curriculum meets the required hours and content requirements specified in ss. [409.175\(14\)\(b\)1.-7.](#), F.S. If the required hours and content requirements are met, the Department shall approve the curriculum.

(3) Each parent preparation pre-service training class shall follow the recommendations of the curriculum designer regarding the number and type of facilitators involved in the training process. If the child-placing agency is the designer of the curriculum, the number and types of facilitators to be involved in the training process must be clearly defined.

f. The Community-Based Care Lead Agency (CBC) is authorized to approve the completion of pre-service training. If individualized training is done, the certified child welfare professional is responsible for complying with the requirements set forth for parent preparation pre-service training in s. [409.175](#), F.S., and the requirements set forth in this chapter.

g. Anyone who wishes to become a licensed out-of-home caregiver shall attend parent preparation pre-service training, as defined in this chapter, offered by any licensed child-placing agency. Agencies shall work cooperatively with each other and prospective licensed out-of-home caregivers to ensure the ongoing availability of such training.

h. Exemptions to the parent preparation pre-service training for individuals who have successfully completed parent preparation pre-service training equivalent to the parent preparation pre-service training offered by the child-placing agency are based on whether the training was completed within the last five years and on the condition that the individual provides proof of successful completion.

(1) If there have been changes or updates to the curriculum, the supervising agency shall require the applicant to take those portions of the course only.

(2) Supervising agencies must request any information regarding the curriculum completed for the purposes of making a recommendation to the Department.

(3) The Regional Licensing Authority shall review the curriculum content of the previously completed parent preparation pre-service training to determine whether it meets the requirements of ss. [409.175\(14\)\(b\)1.-7.](#), F.S., and consider the recommendation of the supervising agency in determining whether the individual is exempt from attending the parent preparation pre-service training.

i. When prospective out-of-home caregivers successfully complete the parent preparation pre-service training but do not continue the licensing process or commence but fail to complete the parent

preparation pre-service training, the supervising agency staff shall document the reason the process was discontinued in FSFN. Completed parent preparation pre-service training is valid for five years from the date of verified curriculum completion.

j. The community based-care lead agency will utilize cultural competency and awareness when recruiting out-of-home caregivers. The agency will provide prospective out-of-home caregivers with cultural competency training to address a variety of cultural backgrounds, values, customs, and beliefs.

16-5. Foster Home Initial Licensing Requirements for All Levels of Licensure.

a. General.

(1) Each applicant wishing to become a licensed out-of-home caregiver shall complete:

(a) The Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms). Persons living together in a caretaking role must both sign the application.

(b) A Release of Information (form CF-FSP [5090](#), available in DCF Forms).

(c) The Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care (form CF-FSP [5226](#), available in DCF Forms).

(d) A Confidentiality Agreement (form CF-FSP [5087](#), available in DCF Forms).

(2) The child-placing agency completing the Unified Home Study (UHS) shall, at a minimum, conduct one visit to the applicant's home, inspect the entire indoor and outdoor premises, document the conditions, and conduct face-to-face interviews with all household members. The dates, names of persons interviewed, and a summary of these interviews shall be documented in the UHS.

(3) The supervising agency is responsible for advising the applicant of all rules, regulations, and standards that apply to the applicant if a license is issued.

b. Attestation may be used during the initial licensure and re-licensure of a family foster home by completing the Attestation for Foster Home Licensure (form CF-FSP [5357](#), available in DCF Forms). The Department issues the license based on the CBC's attestation that the licensure or re-licensure file complies with state law and rule. If the child-placing agency is not contracted with a CBC, it may submit its attestation directly to the Department.

(1) The CBC must also submit the completed Initial Licensing Standards Checklist for 24-Hour Family Care (form CF-FSP [5358](#), available in DCF Forms), or the Re-Licensing Standards Checklist for 24-Hour Family Care (form CF-FSP [5416](#), available in DCF Forms). The checklist must be signed by the supervising agency licensing counselor and his or her supervisor.

(2) CBCs participating in the attestation model for licensure must enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Regional Licensing office. The Memorandum of Agreement for Adoption of Attestation Model for Family Foster Home Licensing (form CF-FSP [5356](#)) is available in DCF Forms.

c. Initial Licensing Unified Home Study (UHS). A staff person, certified pursuant to s. 402.40, F.S., from the supervising agency shall perform a thorough assessment of each prospective licensed out-of-home caregiver and document this assessment in the Unified Home Study section of FSFN. The assessment shall include:

(1) Demographics, including:

(a) Names, dates of birth, addresses, and contact numbers for the caregiver(s), other household members, including biological children, and non-resident children of caregivers;

(b) Verification of Social Security information;

(c) Names, dates of birth, and type of placement of all children who are currently placed in the home (by the Department or another agency) or who exited the home within one year from initiation of the UHS.

(2) Verification of background checks.

(3) Description of current employment. Description of the current employment status for each parent, including occupation, place of employment, work hours and flexibility of schedule in case of emergencies, medical or school appointments for children.

(4) Details of financial capacity and income. Description and documentation of the applicant's current financial capacity and how the impact of the additional children in the home will be addressed.

(5) Child care arrangements. Description of child care arrangements including transportation to and from the child care provider, if applicable.

(6) Assessment and UHS details, including the following:

(a) Current or past experiences with child abuse or neglect, alcohol and/or substance abuse, alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment, or domestic violence.

(b) Any health or mental health conditions, including medication(s).

(c) How the caregiver(s) is(are) able to participate in a professional team supporting the child by sharing necessary information with other professionals on the team and maintaining the confidentiality of the child and caregiver as required by law, rules, regulations, and professional ethics, and participating in planning activities, court hearings, staffings and other key meetings.

(d) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to make a loving commitment to the child(ren)'s safety and well-being by:

1. Providing supervision and positive methods of discipline;

2. Encouraging the child in his or her strengths and respecting the child's individuality and likes and dislikes;

3. Providing opportunities to develop the child's interests and skills;

4. Maintaining awareness of the impact of trauma on behavior;

5. Involving the child in family and community activities;

6. Providing transportation to child care, extracurricular activities, and school (if requested by the CBC). This request shall not be made to circumvent the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 129 Stat. 1802 (2015));

(e) Ensuring the child's safety by employing safety measures, including in the household, for transportation, and with pets.

1. Transportation. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall have transportation available 24 hours a day. All vehicles used to transport children shall be in safe condition and equipped with seat belts for each child transported as required by s. [316.614](#), F.S., and car seats as required by s. [316.613](#), F.S. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall not knowingly allow children to be transported in an uninsured vehicle. Vehicles shall be smoke free, including e-cigarettes and vapor smoke, when children are being transported. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall ensure safety equipment is utilized.

2. Animals. Provide a description of any household pets, exotic pets, or livestock residing on the premises. Descriptions shall include observations of the care, behavior, and/or maintenance and safety plan relating to each animal. The applicant shall have measures in place to assure safety of children from any potentially dangerous animals, and this information shall be documented in the home study, if applicable.

(f) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to respect and honor any child's culture, religion, and ethnicity; meet any child's special physical or psychological needs; and support any child's individual situation. If the caregiving family's religion, culture, or other factors will impair their ability to meet the needs of certain children, an explanation of what the family's limitations are, and how limitations could impact children placed in their home.

(g) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to commit to maintaining any child they accept in their home until such time as it is in the child's best interest to leave the home. An explanation of any problems a long-term commitment may present for the caregiver.

(h) How the caregiver(s) will address challenges in caring for a child, including available supports and resources. These challenges may include, for example, fire setting, sexual reactive behaviors, mental health, substance abuse, and reactive attachment behaviors and may potentially require a safety plan.

(i) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able, when applicable, to participate in transition planning for any child and maintaining a relationship with any child after he or she leaves the home.

(j) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to assist the caregiver(s) from which the child was removed in improving their ability to care for and protect the child, and to provide continuity for the child after reunification.

(k) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to assist any child in family time/visitation and other forms of communication with family members, when applicable.

(l) How the caregiver(s) will:

1. Maintain records that are important to any child's well-being, including child resource records, medical records, school records, photographs, and records of special events and achievements.

2. Ensure that these records are made available to other partners in the child welfare system and to the child and family, as applicable.

(m) The caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to advocate for any child in their care, as needed, with the child welfare system, the court, and community agencies including schools, child care, health and mental health providers, and employers.

(n) A description of previous parenting experience, if applicable.

(o) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to participate fully in any child's medical, psychological and dental care, including providing transportation to and from, attending appointments and communicating with professionals.

(p) How the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to support any child's school success by:

1. Participating in school activities and meetings, including disciplinary and/or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

2. Assisting with school assignments, supporting tutoring programs, meeting with teachers and working with an Educational Surrogate, if one has been appointed, and encouraging any child's participation in extra-curricular activities.

3. For any child who has a disability or is suspected of having a disability, attending Educational Surrogate Parent training, if needed or recommended by the court, and thereafter advocating for the child(ren) in the school system.

4. Maintaining any child(ren) in the school of origin, unless it is not in the child(ren)'s best interest to do so, or maintaining any child(ren) in the school of origin until a logical juncture in the academic year, if not possible or not in the child(ren)'s best interest to remain in the school of origin for the remainder of the school year.

(7) Applicant's motivation to foster and his or her commitment to the foster care experience including how other family members and extended family feel about the decision to foster.

(8) Pre-service training completion and home interview dates.

(9) The responsibilities the applicant(s) will expect the other adults in the household to have with children placed in the home.

(10) Temporary Backup Caregivers.

(11) Social History. A description of the following shall be included:

(a) Background and Family History. Background and family history, including education, types of discipline used in the family, the family's willingness and ability to use appropriate discipline as described in the Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care (form CF-FSP [5226](#), available in DCF Forms), family values, and any prior residences in or out of Florida.

(b) Marital Status and Other Significant Relationships.

(c) Health. Applicants will be required to fully disclose health history for themselves and each member of the household to include current physical, mental or emotional health status, any condition that is progressive and debilitating in its course, and any past and current

treatment and services received for such condition. A current physical shall not be required unless the applicant has disclosed a physical, mental, or emotional condition that jeopardizes the safety and permanency of the child's placement;

(d) Parenting Experience of Each Applicant. All of the applicant's children, including adult children, shall be identified whether they reside in the home or not. If the applicant has parenting experience with children other than their biological or adopted children, circumstances under which this experience was acquired shall be discussed. This section should also include a description of the experience, as opposed to just listing the identities of the applicant's children or the children they may have parented.

(e) Family Life. Document observations of family members' personalities and their interpersonal relationships. Describe family activities, hobbies and interests, and civic involvement including how children placed in the home will participate in these activities as well as family vacations. For each child living in the home, describe the child's school, grades, achievements, and interests. Describe each child's relationship with the applicant(s) and siblings in the home, as well as his or her feelings about having a foster child in the home.

(f) Religion. Assess and document the family's attitudes regarding seeking medical treatment, celebrating holidays or birthdays, and respecting the religious beliefs of the child's family of origin.

(12) Home and Neighborhood.

(a) Physical description of the home, including the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, type and number of available beds and current sleeping arrangements, storage space for children's personal belongings, living area, dining area and other interior space. Interior and exterior photographs must be included. Interior photographs shall include all common living areas, the child's bedroom and bathroom, the storage space for the child's personal belongings, and any other area to which the child may have access.

(b) A description of safety precautions in the home including location and verification of operating fire extinguishers and smoke detectors, storage of medications, cleaning supplies, toxins, and safety nets for trampolines. The description shall also include the storage of alcoholic beverages, location of burglar bars, fireplaces, handrails on stairways, and space heaters, if applicable.

(c) Water Safety. A description of the outdoor area including swimming pools, canals, ponds, lakes, streams, septic tanks, and other potential water hazards and documentation of the counselor's discussion with the applicant regarding the requirements for supervision and how the applicant will ensure safety and adequate supervision.

(d) A completed Foster Home Inspection Checklist (form CF-FSP [5397](#), available in DCF Forms).

16-6. Summary, Recommendations and Process for Submission of Initial Levels of Licensure.

a. Summary and Recommendations.

(1) Recommendation for licensure shall describe the characteristics of children most appropriate for placement in the home. These characteristics shall include level of licensure, number of children, age, gender(s), types of behaviors, and special needs. Explore and address any limitations or concerns and under what conditions the prospective family would not be willing or able to accept a child.

(2) If recommending denial of licensure, the summary shall specify the licensing standards the applicant is unable to meet and attach all supporting documentation. The Department must notify the applicant regarding the appeal process pursuant to Chapter [120](#), F.S.

(3) The UHS shall be reviewed and signed by the applicant, child welfare professional, and his or her supervisor. A copy of the UHS shall be provided to the applicant.

b. The complete application file shall be submitted in accordance with the traditional or attestation model for licensure. A request for additional information shall be submitted by the Regional Licensing Authority within ten business days of receipt of the file. A licensing application file shall consist of the following documentation:

(1) Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms).

(2) Licensing Unified Home Study (UHS).

(3) Proof of income, including:

(a) If the applicant is self-employed, verification of income and length of employment shall be obtained through the applicant's business license, date of incorporation, or IRS Form 1099.

(b) If the applicant is not self-employed, verification shall be obtained via a letter of reference or other documentation from the applicant's employer that indicates the applicant's current employment and income. If current employment is less than two (2) consecutive years in duration, secondary employment references shall be obtained.

(c) Documentation of any other legal verifiable income.

(4) Parent Preparation Pre-service Training certificate.

(5) Parent Preparation Pre-service or family biographical profile, which shall include the demographic and narrative portions of the UHS as completed by the applicant(s).

(6) Documentation of water safety training, if applicable. As a prerequisite to licensure, potential licensed out-of-home caregivers who have swimming pools or whose homes are adjacent to bodies of water unprotected by a barrier of at least four feet will be required to complete a basic water safety course administered by the American Red Cross, YMCA, or a trainer certified in water safety training. This requirement does not apply to homes with temporary wading pools or portable pools with a depth of less than two (2) feet.

(7) Verification of criminal history screening for the applicant and all household members as specified in Rule [65C-13.023\(2\)](#), F.A.C., including:

(a) Affidavit of Good Moral Character (form CF [1649](#), available in DCF Forms);

(b) Local law enforcement check;

(c) Civil court records check;

(d) Florida Department of Law Enforcement records check;

(e) Federal Bureau of Investigation clearance letter;

(f) Abuse history background check through FSFN;

(g) Requests for abuse and neglect histories and civil court records from any other state in which the applicant or any other adult household member has resided during the past five years; and,

(h) Records checks of the Florida Sexual Offenders and Predators registry.

(8) References for Level I caregivers shall include a minimum of two references regarding the family's ability to meet the needs of the child.

(9) References for Level II-V caregivers shall include:

(a) Three (3) personal references who are not related to the applicant(s) and who have known the applicant(s) for at least two (2) years. Each of the three (3) personal references must provide information related to the applicant's parenting skills. References are to be verified either verbally or in writing by the supervising agency staff and documented in the UHS in FSFN.

(b) References from the adult children of each applicant. These references shall address the applicant's suitability to become a licensed out-of-home caregiver. All unsuccessful attempts to solicit information shall be documented in FSFN, and the overall impact of the missing information considered as a part of the recommendation to grant or deny a license.

(c) References from school personnel of each school-age child residing in the home. References shall be documented in the UHS in FSFN.

(d) References from the child care provider of any preschool-age child residing in the home who is enrolled in a child care program. References shall be documented in the UHS in FSFN.

(e) References and documentation regarding any previous licensure as out-of-home caregivers.

(10) Family Documents.

(a) Driver's license(s) reflecting a current address and complete driving records for any household members or other persons identified who may transport children.

(b) Proof of vehicle insurance.

(11) Family Foster Home Safety Documentation.

(a) Fire inspection report (where required by local zoning laws).

(b) Floor plan.

(12) All prospective licensed out-of-home caregivers must complete the Acknowledgement Firearms Safety Requirements (form CF-FSP [5343](#), available in DCF Forms).

c. Unless otherwise outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement for Adoption of Attestation Model for Family Foster Home Licensing (form CF-FSP [5356](#), available in DCF Forms), the Regional Licensing Authority is responsible for ensuring that the licensing application file is complete and that all licensing requirements are met for the issuance of the license. If the child-placing agency is contracted with a CBC, the licensing application file shall contain documentation of a review by the CBC and the Regional Licensing Authority and a recommendation for approval or denial by the CBC.

d. If the application file is approved, a license shall be issued to the applicant(s). The license shall include the name and address of the caregiver(s), the name of the supervising agency, the licensed capacity, and the dates for which the license is valid. The Regional Managing Director or designee within upper level management shall sign the license. Any limitations shall be displayed on the license.

e. A copy of the license shall be provided by the Regional Licensing Authority to the community-based care lead agency or supervising agency. The community-based care lead agency or supervising agency is responsible for ensuring the license is sent to the foster parent.

f. When the Department determines that the application shall be denied, within ten business days the Department shall notify the applicant by certified mail and supervising agency in writing, identifying the reasons for the denial of the license, the statutory authority for the denial of the license, and the applicant's right of appeal pursuant to Chapter [120](#), F.S. The denial and reason(s) for denial shall be recorded in FSFN by the supervising agency. Voluntary withdrawal of an application by an applicant shall be documented in FSFN and does not require formal action by the Department.

16-7. Level I Waivable Requirements.

a. Initial Licensure.

(1) Pursuant to s. [409.175\(5\)\(b\)](#), F.S., items not related to safety can be waived for Level I licensure requirements.

(2) Items deemed waived will not be required in order for an applicant to obtain a Level I Child Specific License through the Department.

(3) The waiving of items not related to safety must be approved in writing by the Regional Managing Director or designee.

(4) Non-Safety Related Waivable requirements:

(a) A licensing specialist who has been trained by the Department or other state entity, such as the local health department, in the areas of water supply, food holding temperature, plumbing, pest control, sewage, and garbage disposal shall complete the Foster Home Inspection Checklist (form CF-FSP [5397](#), available in DCF Forms);

(b) Radon testing results, when required by s. [404.056](#), F.S.;

(c) Evacuation and disaster preparedness plans; and,

(d) Child Care. Child care for children in licensed out-of-home care shall be in a licensed early education or child care program chosen by the caregiver(s). These providers must be participating in the school readiness program through the local early learning coalition. Examples of licensed early education or child care programs include:

1. Gold Seal accredited child care providers or providers participating in a quality rating system;
2. Licensed child care providers;
3. Public school providers; and,

4. License exempt child care providers including religious exempt, registered, and non-public schools.

(5) The home shall have space and furnishings to accommodate the number of people living in the home and be accessible to all members of the family.

(6) Each family foster home shall have a working telephone or cell phone that is accessible at all times. Emergency telephone numbers shall be displayed prominently in the home. Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall notify the supervising agency within one business day if their telephone number changes.

(7) Each child shall be provided with a clean, permanent bed and mattress of his or her own. The bed shall be of sufficient size to accommodate the child.

(8) Infants shall have their own crib which shall be maintained in good and safe condition and have a clean mattress that fits snugly in the crib frame. Cribs shall not have drop sides or be placed close to windows with curtains or cords in which the child might become entangled.

(9) Bunk beds shall be safe and sturdy. Bunk beds shall be equipped with safety rails on the upper tier for a child under the age of 10 or for any child whose physical, mental, or emotional condition indicates the need for such protection. Beds bunked higher than two tiers must have a manufacturer sticker of safety and must not be placed under or near ceiling fans. Children 5 years old and younger may not sleep on the third tier of a three-tiered bunk bed.

(10) A licensed out-of-home caregiver shall provide each child with clean linens. Waterproof mattress covers should be provided for all beds and cribs as developmentally appropriate and necessary.

(11) The entry to a child's bedroom shall not be located so as to require the child to pass through another bedroom or bathroom in order to enter their bedroom.

(12) A child shall never share a bed with an adult or other child, regardless of age.

(13) Children over 36 months of age shall not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite gender unless efforts are being made to maintain a sibling group. In instances where efforts are being made to maintain a sibling group the foster family, licensing agent, and case manager shall work together in determining arrangements for the safety and best interests of the children involved. Rationale for any decision made for children over the age of 36 months to share a bedroom shall be documented in FSFN.

(14) Children over the age of 12 months shall not share a bedroom with an adult, except in the following circumstances:

(a) When one of the children sharing a bedroom reaches his or her 18th birthday and the out-of-home caregiver and the supervising agency approve the sleeping arrangement;

(b) When it is deemed to be medically necessary as documented by a health care provider;

(c) When a teen parent is sharing a bedroom with his or her child;

(d) When a child is transitioning past his or her first birthday; or,

(e) When the adult is a former dependent child who is sharing a room with a sibling.

(15) Infants 12 months of age or younger may share a bedroom with an adult provided the infant sleeps in his or her crib.

(16) Each licensed home shall have a first aid kit available and accessible to all caregivers.

(17) Each floor in the home shall have a fully charged, unexpired 2A10BC fire extinguisher. One of the fire extinguishers shall be adjacent to the kitchen. There shall also be at least one operating smoke alarm on each floor. There shall be a smoke alarm in each bedroom area.

(18) The home shall not be heated by un-vented gas-fired space heaters or oil heaters unless they are equipped with an oxygen depletion sensor and the home has a carbon monoxide alarm. All gas-fired devices shall be equipped with an automatic pilot gas shut-off control. All electrical wiring shall meet required building codes.

(19) All fireplaces, space heaters, steam radiators, and hot surfaces shall be shielded against accidental contact. Access by children under 6 years of age shall be restricted by a barrier.

(20) Extension cords shall not extend from one room to another with the exception of situations involving emergency loss of power. Multiple electric outlet adapters shall not be used for more than two extensions at one time.

(21) Each licensed out-of-home caregiver shall have a current written plan for evacuation in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

(22) The plan shall include where the family intends to go and information as to how the family may be reached and must be shared with the supervising agency.

b. Re-Licensure.

(1) Request a home environmental health inspection report to be completed by a licensing specialist who has been trained by the Department or other state entity, such as the local health department.

(2) Health inspections completed by the Department of Health shall be requested 60 days in advance of the home's re-licensing due date to facilitate the receipt of an environmental health inspection report that indicates the home complies with the requirements specified in the Foster Home Inspection Checklist (form CF-FSP [5397](#), available in DCF Forms) prior to the expiration of the license.

(3) For the homes that are issued a three year license, the health inspection is not required annually; however, the home health inspection must be completed before the end of the three year licensure period.

16-8. Level II Non-Child Specific Foster Home Initial Licensing Requirements.

a. Individuals applying for a Level II Non-Child Specific Foster Home License shall meet all licensing requirements. This shall include all items identified as Level I Waivable requirements.

b. The licensing counselor shall complete one additional licensing home study visit to the applicant's home to inspect the entire home.

16-9. Level III Safe Foster Home for Victims of Human Trafficking Initial Licensing Requirements (standards for certification of safe foster homes). The child-placing agency must submit a letter of recommendation to the Regional Licensing Authority that the licensed foster home be certified as a safe foster home. The letter of recommendation must be accompanied by the following:

- a. An Application for Certification as a Safe Foster Home or Safe House (form CF-FSP [5403](#), available in DCF Forms);
- b. A copy of the applicant's current foster home license and the applicant's licensing history, placement capacity and gender to be served;
- c. A signed Prudent Parenting Partnership Plan for Sexually Exploited Children or Young Adults (form CF-FSP [5404](#), available in DCF Forms);
- d. A description of child-caring arrangements and sleeping arrangements;
- e. Documentation of completed pre-service training, including specialized training in sexual exploitation, pursuant to Rules [65C-43.004\(1\)-\(2\)](#), F.A.C., and continuing educational training hours, if applicable;
- f. Documentation of compliance with the requirements applicable to safe foster homes set forth in ss. [409.1678\(2\)\(c\)-\(d\)](#), F.S.;
- g. A Services Plan for Sexually Exploited Children and Young Adults (form CF-FSP [5405](#), available in DCF Forms), and progress reports;
- h. A recent photograph of the child or young adult; and,
- i. The discharge summary.

16-10. Level IV Therapeutic Foster Home and Level V Medical Foster Home Initial Licensing Requirements.

- a. Individuals seeking Level IV or V licensure must meet all Level II licensure requirements.
- b. The licensing counselor shall complete one additional licensing home study visit to the applicant's home to inspect the entire home.
- c. Homes shall meet all licensing requirements pursuant to the Agency of Health Care Administration.

16-11. Changes During the Licensed Year for All Levels of Licensure.

a. Law Enforcement Involvement. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall report any household member's involvement with law enforcement to the supervising agency within one business day of the occurrence. Law enforcement involvement includes arrests, incidents of domestic violence, driving infractions, and any local law enforcement response to the home during the licensed period.

b. Household Circumstance Changes. In addition to the requirement in paragraph a above, the caregiver shall also report to the CBC within one business day:

- (1) A change in marital or relationship status, including reconciliation or separation.

(a) When a licensed out-of-home caregiver marries, moves in with, or reconciles with an unlicensed spouse or partner, the unlicensed spouse or partner shall submit fingerprints for

background screening within five business days of returning to the residence, unless previously completed.

(b) The unlicensed spouse or partner shall also attend parent preparation pre-service training if not previously completed within the last five years and meet all licensing requirements. The unlicensed spouse or partner shall have six months from the date of marriage, moving in together, or reconciliation to complete pre-service training.

(c) Upon completion of pre-service training, the unlicensed spouse or partner shall complete and submit an Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms).

(d) Failure to meet the licensing and background screening provisions which may threaten the safety of any child in care or place the home in violation of the licensing standards are grounds for denial or revocation of an application or license.

(e) During this evaluation period, the home remains licensed and previously placed children may remain in the home pending the outcome of the assessment. No new children shall be placed in the home until the application has been completed and approved.

(f) The supervising agency will update the UHS, including interviews with all children in the home, verification of satisfactory background screening, and verification of income and expenses, and submit to the CBC within 30 calendar days of marriage, moving in together, or reconciliation.

(g) In cases of separation, divorce or death of a spouse or partner, the supervising agency shall update the UHS summary and assess its impact upon the children placed in the home. The UHS shall summarize the satisfaction of licensing requirements and shall include interviews with the children, if age appropriate, verification of income and expenses, and the remaining caregiver's plan to meet all financial obligations. The updated UHS shall be completed in FSN and submitted to the Regional Licensing Authority within 30 calendar days of the change of status for issuance of an amended license.

(2) A change in household composition, including plans for changes in sleeping arrangements.

(3) A change of physical address.

(4) Changes in financial situation, such as bankruptcy, repossessions, and evictions.

(5) A physical or mental health issue that impacts the ability to provide care for the child.

(6) A change in contact information.

(7) A change in employment or significant change in work or school schedule. A significant change is defined as one that impacts the ability to provide care for the child.

c. The supervising agency shall assess and document the impact on the household immediately upon learning one of these events specified in paragraphs 16-11a and b above has occurred or is likely to occur.

d. All new household members age 18 and older shall be fingerprinted within five business days of residence, and those fingerprints shall be submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement

within five business days of the receipt of the fingerprints by the supervising agency. All household members shall meet the requirements for background screening.

e. The supervising agency shall submit a new "Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children," form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms, to the Regional Licensing Authority for the issuance of an amended license.

f. Change of Location. A licensed out-of-home caregiver shall notify the supervising agency no less than 30 calendar days prior to the expected date of the relocation. The supervising agency shall update the UHS summary for submission to the Regional Licensing Authority for issuance of an amended license within 30 calendar days of the relocation.

(1) Within Region.

(a) Changing location within the region shall require an Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms), a new UHS for the new location, a satisfactory environmental health inspection of the new residence, the current floor plan, disaster plan, home emergency evacuation plan, fire inspection where required by local zoning laws, and radon testing where applicable.

(b) The supervising agency shall obtain all required documentation and submit the documentation to the CBC for review. The CBC will submit all required documents to the Regional Licensing Authority to initiate the issuance of an amended license. Noncontracted supervising agencies shall obtain all required documentation and submit the documentation directly to the Regional Licensing Authority.

(c) The supervising agency shall complete at least one home visit as part of the updated licensing home study.

(d) If approved, an amended license shall be issued and shall expire on the same date as the previous license.

(e) If licensure of the new home is not recommended and there are children currently placed in the home, the primary case manager shall immediately assess whether alternative placement is necessary.

(2) Between Regions.

(a) A licensed out-of-home caregiver who plans to move from one region to another and wishes to continue being licensed shall notify his or her current supervising agency at least 30 calendar days prior to the planned move. Coordination and responsibility for ensuring the transition of the license shall be as follows:

1. The supervising agency shall assist the licensed out-of-home caregiver in finding a supervising agency in the new region.

2. The current CBC and supervising agency will work in partnership to secure a commitment from the receiving supervising agency in the new region to complete the requirements for licensing the new home.

(b) The current supervising agency shall send the new supervising agency a copy of the licensed out-of-home caregiver's signed Release of Information for Foster/Adoptive Parent Application (form CF-FSP [5090](#), available in DCF Forms). Upon receipt, the new supervising agency shall access the family's information in FSFN. If the new supervising agency does not have access to

FSFN, the current supervising agency shall provide a complete copy of the licensing file, including the new contact information for the out-of-home caregiver, to the new supervising agency.

(c) The new supervising agency will contact the licensed out-of-home caregivers within five business days upon notification of the relocation to begin the licensing process.

(d) When currently placed children are relocating with the out-of-home caregiver, the new supervising agency shall submit the home study and completed application file according to the regional licensing submission process within 30 calendar days of notification of relocation.

(e) The Regional Licensing Authority in the new region shall request any additional documentation legally required to ensure that all minimum standards and out-of-home caregiver expectations are met within ten business days of receipt of the application file. If no additional information is legally required, the new license shall be issued within ten business days of receipt of the complete application file.

(f) If the decision is made to deny the new application, the Regional Licensing Authority will notify the applicant and supervising agency by certified mail within five business days of the decision to deny, identifying the reasons for the denial of the license, the statutory authority for the denial of the license, and the applicant's right of appeal pursuant to Chapter [120](#), F.S.

1. The denial and reason(s) for denial shall be recorded in FSFN by the supervising agency.

2. If there are any children who moved with the caregiver from the former region, the Regional Licensing Authority will notify the new supervising agency within 24 hours of the decision to deny the application.

3. The new supervising agency shall notify the former supervising agency and the contracted service provider responsible for courtesy supervision within 24 hours of receiving the notice.

4. All possible placement options, the possible risk to the children, and their best interest shall be considered, and a decision made regarding their placement within 24 hours of receipt of the notification.

5. The removal and placement of the children is the responsibility of the former supervising agency and the contracted service provider with primary responsibility for supervision of the children.

(3) Out-of-State. The same process as outlined for a change between regions is to be followed if a licensed out-of-home caregiver moves out-of-state. However, if the children are to move out-of-state with the licensed out-of-home caregiver, the primary case manager is required to initiate an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children request pursuant to s. [409.401](#), F.S.

g. Change of Supervising Agency.

(1) A currently licensed out-of-home caregiver wishing to change providers shall notify in writing his or her current supervising agency.

(2) Within 15 calendar days of being notified of the requested change, the current supervising agency shall notify the Regional Licensing Authority. The desired supervising agency shall:

(a) Request all information concerning the performance of the respective licensed out-of-home caregiver from the current supervising agency, including the agency's recommendation for licensure;

(b) Consider the application and advise the applicant in writing of whether it does or does not find the family appropriate for transfer to its agency within 30 days of receipt of the application; and,

(c) Notify the sending agency and the Department of the determination.

(d) If the family is found to be inappropriate for continued licensure, the supervising agency and Regional Licensing Authority shall deny the application, and the Department shall make the family aware of the appeal process. The denial and reason(s) for denial shall be recorded in FSFN by the supervising agency.

(3) Supervising agencies shall share all information concerning the performance of the licensed out-of-home caregiver, along with their recommendations, upon request.

(4) If the licensed out-of-home caregiver is accepted, the new supervising agency shall submit a new application packet according to the regional licensing submission process for issuance of the new license.

(5) If the request to change providers occurs during the licensure year, the new supervising agency need only submit an Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms), and letter of acceptance in accordance with the regional licensing submission process.

(6) Upon notification, the Regional Licensing Authority shall have 15 calendar days to notify the licensed caregiver's requested supervising agency of the request to amend the license.

(7) The Regional Licensing Authority will issue an amended license to reflect the new supervising agency for the remainder of the established licensure year. The new supervising agency assumes all responsibility for the annual re-licensure activities.

16-12. Standards for All Licensed Out-of-Home Caregivers.

a. Requirements.

(1) All licensed out-of-home caregivers shall comply with Rules [65C-28.003\(1\)](#), [\(3\)](#) and [\(4\)](#); [65C-28.009\(2\)](#); [65C-28.018\(1\)](#); and, [65C-28.019](#), F.A.C.

(2) Placement capacity shall comply with s. [409.175\(3\)](#), F.S.

(3) Each licensed out-of-home caregiver shall sign a Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care (form CF-FSP [5226](#), available in DCF Forms). The agreement shall be reviewed and discussed with a licensing counselor prior to initial licensure and again at each re-licensure. The document must be signed by a representative from the supervising agency, the potential or licensed out-of-home caregiver, and at placement by the case manager.

(4) The child's resource record (CRR) shall be maintained by the licensed out-of-home caregiver. The CRR is a standardized record developed and maintained for every child entering out-of-

home care that contains copies of the basic legal, demographic, available and accessible educational, and available and accessible medical and psychological information pertaining to a specific child, as well as any documents necessary for a child to receive medical treatment and educational services.

(a) Where medical or educational information is not available and accessible, written documentation of the efforts made to obtain the information must be in the file.

(b) The CRR shall be housed where the child is placed, shall accompany the child to every health encounter, and shall be updated as events occur.

b. Food and Nutrition.

(1) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall provide nutritionally balanced meals and age appropriate snacks daily.

(2) Licensed out-of-home caregivers are expected to provide for any special dietary needs of children placed in their home. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall be sensitive to the parent's input regarding special dietary needs.

(3) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not withhold food as a means of discipline or punishment.

c. Discipline.

(1) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall discipline children with kindness, consistency, and understanding, and with the purpose of helping the child develop responsibility and self-control.

(2) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall use positive methods of discipline. Acceptable methods of discipline include: reinforcing acceptable behavior, expressing verbal disappointment of the child's behavior, loss of privileges, grounding, restricting the child to the house or yard, sending the child out of the room and away from the family activity, and redirecting the child's activity.

(3) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not subject children to cruel, severe, or unusual forms of discipline.

(4) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not use corporal punishments of any kind.

(5) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not delegate discipline or permit punishment of a child by another child or by another adult not in a caregiver role.

(6) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not withhold meals, clothing, allowance, or shelter as a form of discipline.

(7) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not ridicule or punish a child for bed-wetting or other lapses in toileting.

(8) No child shall be mechanically restrained or locked in any enclosure, room, closet, bathroom or area of the house or premises, for any reason.

(9) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall not threaten a child with removal, or with a report to authorities, or prohibit visitation with family and significant others as consequences for unacceptable behavior.

(10) Licensed out-of-home caregivers will seek the assistance of the child's case manager or therapist for behavior problems.

d. Placement of a child in a home licensed by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) shall be approved by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities prior to placement. A home licensed by APD may be utilized for placement of children eligible for both programs without obtaining a separate license if the child is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

e. Licensed Out-of-Home Caregivers Providing Child Care.

(1) Licensed out-of-home caregivers contracting with a CBC are authorized by s. [409.988\(2\)\(c\)](#), F.S., to provide child care as a Licensed Family Day Care Home, as defined in s. [402.302](#), F.S., and may be dually licensed.

(2) All licensing standards and requirements for family foster homes and family day care homes shall be met and maintained.

(3) Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall limit their hours of operation as a Family Day Care Home to be between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

(4) The out-of-home caregiver shall not be paid both the foster care board rate and child care subsidy for the same child.

(5) A family foster home providing child care under this paragraph shall be inspected a minimum of twice per year, at least once by daycare licensing staff and once by the supervising agency's licensing specialist. The inspection is to assess the impact of the child care operation on the children in care.

(6) If a family foster home is also licensed as a Family Day Care Home, the Department shall coordinate inspections with a licensing counselor from the child-care licensing program.

(7) Complaint investigations shall be conducted in conjunction with a representative from child care licensing.

f. Caregiver Standards.

(1) A licensed out-of-home caregiver shall be a stable, responsible, and mature individual who is at least 21 years of age.

(2) At least one licensed out-of-home caregiver in the home shall be able to effectively communicate with any child placed in the home.

(3) A licensed out-of-home caregiver shall not operate the home as an adult boarding or rooming home or an adult daycare facility.

16-13. Supports for All Foster Parents.

a. CBCs and their contracted providers will provide ongoing support to licensed out-of-home caregivers.

b. At a minimum, quarterly contacts shall be made with each licensed caregiver home.

c. Supports to caregivers can include, but are not be limited to:

(1) Access to foster parent support groups;

- (2) Service resources for children placed in the home;
- (3) Foster Parent mentors; and,
- (4) Service resources for caregivers.

16-14. Re-Licensing Requirements for All Levels of Licensure.

a. Requirements.

(1) Re-licensing procedures shall be initiated by the supervising agency and the re-licensing file shall be submitted to the licensing authority at least 30 calendar days prior to expiration of the current license. However, if the attestation model is used, the re-licensing file shall be submitted to the licensing authority at least ten business days prior to expiration of the current license. The re-licensing process shall not be initiated more than 90 calendar days prior to the expiration of the current license.

(2) Out-of-home caregivers requesting to be re-licensed shall complete the Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (form CF-FSP [5007](#), available in DCF Forms).

(a) Persons living together in a caretaking role, as determined by the supervising agency, shall both sign the application.

(b) Persons shall be considered living together in a caretaking role if:

1. The person living in the home is the partner (paramour) of the primary caregiver; or;

2. The person living in the home will have responsibility for caring for the children in the home and addressing their needs.

(c) An applicant shall sign all required re-licensing documentation as requested.

(3) The supervising agency shall ensure the completion of the application process by completing the following:

(a) Direct the licensed out-of-home caregivers to obtain a radon test at the fifth year for licensing purposes, if required by s. [404.056](#), F.S.

(b) After two radon measurements with negative results, no further testing is required unless the home has significant structural changes.

(4) The supervising agency shall ensure that all required background screening has been completed pursuant to Rule [65C-13.023](#), F.A.C.

(5) References. The supervising agency responsible for completing the re-licensing home study shall obtain and review information about the home from the Case Manager/Case Worker Review of Foster Parent (form CF-FSP [5223](#), available in DCF Forms), and the Quality of Licensed Caregiver's Home – Community Input (form CF-FSP [5225](#), available in DCF Forms). The Case Manager/Case Worker Review of Foster Parent and at least one Quality of Licensed Caregiver's Home – Community Input shall be completed for every child who has been placed for a minimum of 30 calendar days. The supervising agency and case manager must staff and address in FSFN any issues raised by the case manager in the re-licensing home study.

(6) The supervising agency shall obtain the completed Exit Interview about Foster Parents (form CF-FSP [5353](#), available in DCF Forms). This form must be completed for every child over the age of 5 who exits the home following a placement of 30 calendar days or longer. The supervising agency will review the exit interviews and must address issues raised in the exit interviews in the re-licensing summary. The re-licensing file must contain all applicable exit interviews. If exit interviews are not provided with the re-licensing file, the supervising agency must document efforts made to secure the exit interviews, and the proper administrator of the CBC and supervising agency shall be notified.

(7) The supervising agency shall obtain from the licensed out-of-home caregiver a completed Foster Parent's Review of the Case Worker/Care Manager (form CF-FSP [5224](#), available in DCF Forms), and review information from case managers who supervised children in the home during the previous licensing year. The supervising agency must address any issues raised by the licensed out-of-home caregiver with the case management staff and in the re-licensing home study.

(8) Applicants for renewal shall provide the agency with:

(a) Documentation of at least eight hours of continuing education annually; and,

(b) A current driver's license, driving record, and auto insurance coverage information, as applicable.

b. Re-Licensing Procedures.

(1) The supervising agency shall conduct a minimum of one face-to-face visit in the home and interview all household members prior to re-licensure.

(2) The supervising agency shall review and discuss the Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care (form CF-FSP [5226](#), available in DCF Forms) with the applicants, and document the date of the discussion in FSFN.

(3) The licensing counselor shall inspect the entire premises of the home, including all interior and exterior areas, for continued compliance with licensing standards. A narrative shall be included in the Physical Environment section of the UHS.

(4) Vehicles used for transporting children shall be observed for seatbelt compliance and any obvious safety hazards documented and addressed in a corrective action plan, if necessary. Observations, including compliance, shall be included in the UHS.

(5) Fire drill logs shall be reviewed and discussed to ensure continued compliance with licensing standards. The evacuation plan and disaster preparedness plan shall be reviewed and discussed.

c. Re-Licensing Unified Home Study (UHS). As a part of the re-licensing application file, the supervising agency shall make a thorough assessment and evaluation of each licensed out-of-home caregiver and document this evaluation using the Unified Home Study module in FSFN.

(1) The updated home study shall include all of the assessments required for an initial licensing home study as specified in Rule [65C-13.025](#), F.A.C. In addition, the updated home study shall include an assessment of fostering experiences over the past licensing year, including:

(a) Youth exit interviews, case manager reviews, and foster parent reviews;

(b) Documentation of at least eight hours (annually) of continuing education;

- (c) Documentation of updated water safety training, if applicable;
- (d) Background screening, pursuant to Rule 65C-45.001, F.A.C;
- (e) Documentation of driver's license(s) and vehicle insurance; and,

(f) Updated evacuation and disaster preparedness plan, if changes in the layout of the home or means of egress have occurred.

(2) Discipline. Description of how the licensed out-of-home caregiver has managed behavior with children placed in the home.

(3) Family Life. Documentation of the licensed out-of-home caregiver's support and integration of children into the family, such as attendance at and involvement with children's activities, ensuring children have reliable transportation to school, social events, medical appointments, and inclusion in other family activities. The supervising agency will describe the licensed out-of-home caregiver's attentiveness to the provision of clothing and allowances to the children in his or her care.

(a) Documentation of the level of cooperation of licensed out-of-home caregivers with the children's families, including visitation for children placed in the home during the previous licensing year. Describe of how the family has worked with the supervising agency and other service providers.

(b) Documentation of the licensed out-of-home caregiver's compliance with proper administration and monitoring of medication, and cooperation with medical directives and appointments.

(c) Documentation of the maintenance of school and resource records for each child in placement.

(4) History of Placement Activity. Placement activity during the previous licensing year shall be identified and discussed. If the family requested that a child be moved, the reasons and circumstances must be addressed. The narrative must provide detail about each child who has left the home and address how the family has worked with each child;

(5) Youth Exit Interviews. An Exit Interview with Foster Child About Foster Parents (form CF-FSP [5353](#), available in DCF Forms) must be conducted and assessed with every child age 5 through 18 who lived in the home for 30 days or longer.

(6) Staff Feedback. A summary of feedback from lead and/or supervising agency staff members as it relates to the family's continued suitability and performance as a licensed out-of-home caregiver.

(7) Investigations, Special Condition Referrals, Concerns or Complaints. A summary assessment of investigations and special condition referrals, incident reports, accidents, and complaints during the previous licensing period.

(8) Summary.

(a) All forms and information obtained as a part of the re-licensing process shall be summarized in a written narrative. The narrative should include the characteristics of children for whom the family is most appropriate, including the number of children, age, gender, special needs, and behaviors.

(b) The UHS shall be completed, reviewed, and approved in FSFN. The home study shall also be signed and dated by the counselor responsible for completing the study and the counselor's supervisor.

(c) The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall be offered an opportunity to sign the home study and must be provided a copy. The signature pages shall be uploaded as an attachment to the Unified Home Study module in FSFN.

d. Re-Licensing Process.

(1) A supervising agency shall conduct an annual re-licensing evaluation of the agency's licensed homes in order to make a recommendation, prior to licensing expiration, to the Department regarding renewal of each family's license.

(2) If the region does not participate in the attestation model for license, the Regional Licensing Authority shall determine if the re-licensing application file is complete and notify the CBC in writing of the need for any additional materials or information within ten business days of receipt of the re-licensing list. The CBC must submit the necessary materials or information to the Regional Licensing Authority within ten business days of receipt of the written notice. A license cannot be issued until all information has been received.

(3) If approved, a license shall be issued to the applicant no later than ten business days from receipt of the complete re-licensing file.

(4) If the completed file of materials was received prior to the expiration of the existing license, upon approval, the renewal date of licensure shall begin on the day the existing license expires.

(5) If the submitted application file is not complete at the time the existing license expires, the renewal date of licensure shall be the actual date of approval by the Regional Licensing Authority. No child shall be placed or remain in an unlicensed setting.

(6) A copy of the license shall be provided by the Regional Licensing Authority to the CBC for dissemination to the supervising agency or directly to the supervising agency if the agency does not contract with the CBC. The supervising agency is responsible for sending the license to the family.

(7) If the supervising agency or Regional Licensing Authority determines that the out-of-home caregivers have not satisfactorily met the standards for continued licensure, the licensing authority shall consult with the regional legal counsel, CBC, and supervising agency concerning the appropriate course of action.

(8) If the Regional Licensing Authority denies the application for re-licensure, the applicant shall be notified in writing within ten business days of the determination, identifying the reasons for the denial, the statutory authority for the denial, and the applicant's right of appeal pursuant to Chapter [120](#), F.S. The applicant shall be afforded the opportunity to withdraw the application. If the applicant elects to withdraw the application, this must be documented in FSFN.

e. Three-Year License. A family foster home shall not be issued a 3-year license unless the following criteria are met:

(1) The family has been licensed for at least the three previous consecutive years.

(2) The family has not been the subject of a report of child abuse or neglect with verified findings of maltreatment or a foster care referral leading to a corrective action plan.

(3) The family is in good standing with the Department as evidenced by the following:

(a) The family has not been placed on a performance improvement plan/corrective action plan during the last three years.

(b) The family has clear background checks. An exemption from disqualification pursuant to s. [435.07](#), F.S., shall not be considered a clear background check.

f. Applicants Previously Licensed or Approved in another State or Region.

(1) If the applicants were licensed previously in another state or outside the region in which they are seeking licensure, the supervising agency shall make a written request to the previous licensing agency for a reference, copies of the initial and previous licensing studies, closing summaries, information about any complaints, foster care referrals, or concerns expressed regarding the prospective family's parenting ability, reason for closure, and the results of their background screening and abuse history check.

(2) The written request and all information received from the originating state or region shall be included in the application file. All attempts to obtain the information shall be documented.

16-15. Conflict of Interest for All Levels of Licensure – Employees, Relatives and Sub-Contractors as Licensed Out-of-Home Caregivers. Licensing of employees of the Department, county sheriff's offices, CBCs, and their subcontracted providers or their relatives who desire to become out-of-home caregivers is allowable as long as the following conditions are met:

a. No actual or perceived conflict of interest exists that could result in preferential treatment concerning the licensing process or the placement and movement of children placed in the potential licensed family foster home;

b. The licensing study is completed by a licensed child-placing agency outside of the employee's service area and submitted to the Regional Licensing Authority for approval;

c. The executive director or designee in upper level management of CBC or supervising agency responsible for submitting the employee, relative, or subcontractor licensing file to the Department has reviewed and approved the submission of the application to the Department; and,

d. The Regional Licensing Authority obtains approval of the application from the Regional Managing Director or designee prior to issuing a family foster care license for an employee, relative, or subcontractor.

16-16. Terms of a License for All Levels of Licensure.

a. The Regional Licensing Authority shall request, in writing, any additional information legally required for the purposes of making a licensing determination within ten business days of receipt of an application file. The Regional Licensing Authority shall grant or deny an initial license application within ten business days of receipt of a complete application file. The decision on whether to grant or deny the initial license application shall be based on whether the applicant has submitted a completed application file or attestation and has a favorable home study in accordance with Rules [65C-13.025\(4\) and \(5\)](#), F.A.C.

b. Offices, conference rooms, and other non-home-like settings shall not be licensed for placement of children in care.

c. The license shall reflect the name of the licensee, the licensee's physical address, city and county, the name of the supervising agency, and the license number along with its beginning and expiration dates.

d. If the Regional Licensing Authority determines that a reduction in the licensure period of a three-year license is warranted based on a licensing violation, it shall notify the supervising agency and the applicant in writing, identifying the reasons for the reduction in the licensure period, and the statutory authority for the reduction.

e. Authorized licensing staff of the Regional Licensing Authority or supervising agency may make unannounced inspections of a licensed family foster home. The inspection may include examination of all rooms and areas on the property and interviews of all household members.

f. All licenses shall be signed by the Regional Managing Director or designee in upper level management.

g. License Modifications.

(1) Modifications shall be made to a license at the request of the licensed out-of-home caregiver following an assessment by licensing staff, or as a result of corrective measures.

(2) Modifications which alter information set forth on the existing license shall result in the issuance of a new license. This new license shall expire on the same date as on the existing license.

(3) If a request for modification occurs within 90 days of the expiration of the license, the supervising agency may conduct all activities consistent with re-licensure. The new license shall be valid for one year from the new date of issuance.

h. File Retention.

(1) The supervising agency shall retain a central file in the region for every family foster home licensed. The file shall include:

(a) All initial and subsequent licensing documentation, as well as all other licensing related activities including documentation of background screening requirements;

(b) Complaint investigation information;

(c) Waivers and exceptions;

(d) Other additional documentation obtained regarding the licensed home; and,

(e) A termination summary for homes which are closed and the reason for closing. The termination summary should be entered as a Provider Note in FSFN.

(2) Central files must be maintained in a secure location and made available for monitoring or auditing purposes.

(3) An electronic version of the licensing file shall be maintained by the supervising agency in the electronic filing cabinet located in FSFN. The supervising agency shall develop a policy

that addresses the destruction of paper files; this policy must be reviewed and approved by the Regional Licensing Authority.

(4) Central files of prospective licensed out-of-home caregivers who are not denied licensure but who do not become licensed shall be retained by the supervising agency for a period of five years.

(5) Central files of licensed out-of-home caregivers shall be maintained for 20 years after closure.

(6) Central files of applicants who are denied licensure shall be maintained for a period of 20 years after the issuance of the denial or final denial order date, whichever is later.

16-17. Over-Capacity Assessments and Exceptions for All Levels of Licensure.

a. Capacity.

(1) A recommendation shall be made by the supervising agency for the licensed capacity in each family foster home based on:

(a) An evaluation of the skills, experience, and support network of the prospective licensed out-of-home caregiver;

(b) The physical space in the home; and,

(c) The needs of the children served.

(2) The total number of children in the home shall not exceed five children, including the out-of-home caregiver's own children, unless an assessment is completed, and approval given pursuant to s. [409.175\(3\)\(b\)](#), F.S., and in accordance with this chapter.

(3) There shall be no more than two infants under 24 months of age in a licensed home, including the out-of-home caregiver's own children, unless an assessment is completed, and approval given in accordance with this chapter.

b. Approval of Over-Capacity Assessments for Over Five Children or More than Two Infants.

(1) Assessment approvals for more than five children or more than two infants under 24 months of age shall be given by the supervisor in writing or via electronic method prior to placement and shall be approved personally and in writing the next business day by the Regional Managing Director or their designee.

(2) The assessment of each child in the home and of the child being placed in the home shall be completed by the placement staff.

(a) The assessment shall include:

1. The medical, mental, physical, and behavioral needs of each child.

2. A clear, concise explanation of why the over-capacity waiver should be approved including the reason it has been determined that this is the most appropriate available placement.

3. A description of any special services or support systems which may be necessary to assure the well-being of the child being placed.

4. A description of how this home can physically accommodate the additional child. Accommodations shall include a bed, adequate closet space, and room for personal possessions and adequate privacy.

5. Information concerning how the needs of any particularly vulnerable child currently in placement can be adequately protected.

6. Placement needs and risk factors for children who have been sexually victimized or who are sexually aggressive.

7. Verification that there are no active complaints, licensing standards in violation, active abuse reports or foster care referrals for the proposed placement.

8. The duration of the waiver; initial assessment approval shall not exceed 30 days. Subsequent approvals for the same child or children may be approved for 90-day extensions personally and in writing by the Regional Managing Director or their designees.

(b) Requirements for the Assessment.

1. The placement staff shall provide to the case manager a copy of the completed assessment within five business days of the child's placement.

2. The written and approved assessment shall be placed in the licensing file of the out-of-home caregiver.

3. The licensing counselor shall conduct a home visit with the licensed out-of-home caregiver within seven calendar days of a child's placement to ensure that all services identified by the case manager are in place to support the out-of-home caregiver.

(c) Over-Capacity Exception and Age Differential Approvals.

1. Written approval of the exception shall be obtained prior to placement when the licensed capacity and recommended ages of children are exceeded. The exception shall be approved by the supervisor in writing or via electronic method and shall be approved personally and in writing the next business day by the Regional Managing Director or their designee.

2. An initial approval shall not exceed 90 calendar days. Subsequent approvals for the same child may be approved for 180 day extensions.

3. The approval for the over-capacity exception shall automatically expire when the total number of children in the home is at or below the licensed capacity.

4. All child placements shall be recorded in FSFN by the supervising agency within 48 hours of placement. When such a placement causes a home to exceed a total of five children, the approval shall be recorded as a Provider Note in FSFN.

16-18. Babysitting, Overnight Care, Extended Overnight Care and Other Supervision Arrangements for All Levels of Licensure.

a. The licensed out-of-home caregiver is responsible for ensuring that individuals providing babysitting are suitable for the age, developmental level, and behaviors of the children. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall use a reasonable and prudent parent standard, as defined in s. [39.4091\(2\)\(c\)](#), F.S., in choosing any babysitters or assessing a child's ability to stay home alone.

b. The licensed out-of-home caregiver is responsible for ensuring babysitters receive instructions that cover protocol for handling emergencies including telephone numbers for the licensed out-of-home caregiver, case manager, and physician. The discipline policy and confidentiality policy shall be clearly explained.

c. Babysitting does not have to occur in a licensed setting.

d. If the alternate care being provided for the child meets the definition of “child care” as defined in s. [402.302](#), F.S., the child care personnel must meet the standards set forth in s. [402.305\(2\)](#), F.S.

e. Extended Overnight Care.

(1) Families shall take children in their care on family vacations and trips whenever possible. Caregivers shall notify the child welfare professional in advance of all overnight stays exceeding three nights.

(2) The following procedures apply when the caregiver must be absent for more than three nights and the child cannot accompany him or her:

(a) Foster parents will be allowed to select families or individuals who are well known to them to care for the child in their absence. At the time of licensing and re-licensing, licensed caregivers shall identify the families or individuals who provide temporary alternate care for the children in their care.

(b) Except in emergency circumstances, the adults in these families must have criminal and child abuse background checks including finger printing. In emergency circumstances, a full background screening will be initiated the next business day. Such persons shall be recorded in the Unified Home Study module in FSN.

16-19. Foster Care Referrals and Investigations for All Levels of Licensure.

a. The Regional Licensing Authority maintains responsibility for ensuring follow-up actions are taken on all foster care referrals and investigations. The supervising agency shall ensure that all licensed out-of-home caregivers are notified of foster care referrals. Licensed out-of-home caregivers shall be notified of investigations by the child protective investigator.

b. The Regional Licensing Authority, CBC and supervising agency have the right to inspect the entire premises of the licensed out-of-home caregiver at any time.

c. Foster Care Referrals. Upon receipt by the child protection investigation unit of a foster care referral regarding a foster home, the foster care referral shall be immediately forwarded to the appropriate supervising agency licensing staff. The licensing staff receiving the foster care referral shall:

(1) Respond to the foster care referral and document any needed actions within 48 hours.

(2) Prepare a written corrective action plan to correct the deficiencies that are a result of a foster care referral. The plan shall be developed by the supervising agency in conjunction with the licensed out-of-home caregivers and shall be approved by the Regional Licensing Authority.

(3) Make a call to the Florida Abuse Hotline if there are suspicions of abuse or neglect.

d. Investigations. When the supervising agency or Regional Licensing Authority is notified of an investigation, a staffing shall be coordinated according to local protocol. If licensing violations are found which do not pose an immediate threat to the health, safety, or well-being of the child, the supervising agency shall prepare a written corrective action plan to correct the deficiencies. The plan shall be developed by the supervising agency in conjunction with the licensed out-of-home caregivers and shall be approved by the Regional Licensing Authority.

16-20. Administrative Actions, Appeals and Closures for All Levels of Licensure.

a. General Information. The Department is the Regional Licensing Authority for all family foster homes and has final authority to approve or deny any license.

(1) The denial or revocation of a license shall be recorded in FSFN by the Regional Licensing Authority.

(2) The Regional Licensing Authority shall notify the CBC and supervising agency immediately of any adverse action taken regarding a license.

b. Documentation Requirements Prior to Administrative Action.

(1) Before making a determination that a license shall be denied or revoked, the following shall be documented in the licensing file:

(a) All qualifying abuse reports and all reports of licensing violations and the outcome of the investigation;

(b) List of all deficiencies or conditions, other than abuse or neglect of a child, which compromise the safety or well-being of the children;

(c) The length of time and frequency of the noncompliance with the licensing requirements or deficiencies in caring for a child;

(d) The date of written notification to the licensee as to the deficiency and time given to the licensee to correct the deficiency;

(e) The licensing staff's efforts to help the licensee come into compliance; and,

(f) Barriers, if any, which prohibit the licensee from correcting the deficiencies.

(2) All license revocations and denials shall comply with requirements of Chapter [120](#), F.S.;

(3) All documentation shall be reviewed with the Department's legal counsel. The notice of revocation or denial shall not be sent to the out-of-home caregiver without approval of both the Department's legal counsel and the Regional Licensing Authority.

c. Denial of Initial Licensure.

(1) The Regional Licensing Authority shall have 30 days following receipt of a complete application packet to grant or deny the application in accordance with s. [120.60](#), F.S., and notify the supervising agency of the decision.

(2) If the Regional Licensing Authority determines that the applicant should not be licensed, the supervising agency shall notify the applicant in writing within ten business days of the determination, identifying the reasons for the denial, the statutory authority for the denial, and the

applicant's right of appeal pursuant to Chapter [120](#), F.S. The applicant shall be afforded the opportunity to withdraw the application. If the applicant elects to withdraw the application, the withdrawal must be documented in writing in the licensing file.

(3) If the applicant does not withdraw the application, the supervising agency shall provide to the Regional Licensing Authority information to support the recommendation of the denial. When the Regional Licensing Authority determines that the license should be denied, they shall notify the applicant in writing within ten business days of the decision, identifying the reasons for the denial, the statutory authority for the denial, and the applicant's right of appeal pursuant to Chapter [120](#), F.S.

d. Administrative Action for Existing Family Foster Homes.

(1) If licensing violations are found such that the child's physical, mental, or emotional health is or has been adversely impacted as a result of the violation or is in danger of being adversely impacted, the licensing counselor shall consult with his or her supervisor and the child's case manager for an immediate review of the safety of any children in the home and a call shall be made to the Florida Abuse Hotline.

(2) If licensing violations are found which do not pose an immediate threat to the health, safety, or welfare of a child, the supervising agency shall prepare a written corrective action plan to correct the deficiencies. The plan shall be developed by the supervising agency in conjunction with the licensed out-of-home caregivers and shall be approved by the Regional Licensing Authority.

(3) Written notification shall be sent to the licensed out-of-home caregiver that specifies the deficiency, expected corrective action, time frame for completion, and that failure to comply within the time frame specified shall result in the license being revoked. The approved corrective action plan shall be put in writing by the supervising agency and signed by the licensed out-of-home caregiver.

(4) Corrective action plans are created for licensed out-of-home caregivers who have the ability to understand and correct the infraction. Corrective action plans are not created for licensed out-of-home caregivers who have previously committed licensing violations and were unable to benefit from remedial efforts. In these cases, the supervising agency shall work with the licensing authority, the Department's legal counsel, and CBC to determine whether action should be taken to revoke the license.

(5) Failure of the licensed out-of-home caregiver to timely comply with the corrective action plan shall result in denial of re-licensure and/or revocation of the license.

(6) The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall be given notice if the supervising agency determines that it cannot recommend re-licensure.

(7) If the licensed out-of-home caregiver disagrees with the supervising agency's recommendation, he or she may still request renewal of the license. The supervising agency shall accept the application and refer the licensed out-of-home caregiver's file to the Regional Licensing Authority with a recommendation for denial.

(8) A decision to revoke or deny further licensure is made after a review is done in conjunction with the Department's legal counsel, supervising and lead agencies. The notice must be delivered via personal service or certified mail. The notice shall include the statutory and rule violations that were found, advise of the action to be taken, and the right to challenge the action through an administrative proceeding as provided in Chapter [120](#), F.S.

e. Voluntary Closures.

(1) The supervising agency shall conduct an exit interview with licensed out-of-home caregivers who are closing. This interview is an opportunity to explore any recommendations for improvement that the licensed out-of-home caregiver may be willing to share.

(2) The supervising agency shall document the reason for closure and whether re-licensing would be recommended in FSFN.

(3) If re-licensing would not be recommended, the licensing file shall document the reasons re-licensing would not be recommended.

(4) If the closure is voluntary and in lieu of revocation or denial of a license, the supervising agency shall document the reason for the denial in FSFN.