

Module 1: Overview of Licensing

Licensing Pre-Service Curriculum



Participant Guide

Office of Child Welfare

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Module References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 39, F.S. • Section 409.175, F.S. • Section 409.145, F.S., Care of Children, Quality Parenting and Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard • Chapter 65C-13, F.A.C. • DCF Operating Procedures • All legal references are available on Florida’s Center for Child Welfare website under the policies tab. http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/index.shtml#
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Unit 1.1: Introduction to Licensing

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the goal of foster care licensing.
2. Describe the types of circumstances that would bring children into licensed care.
3. Explain the role of foster care licensing as it relates to the family-centered practice.
4. Recognize the importance of quality parenting and establishing a relationship with foster parents as partners.
5. Explain the role of the Foster Care Licensing Specialist with other members of the Child Welfare team.

Activity A: My Journey to Foster Care Licensing

Directions: Using the worksheet while working in pairs, take turns interviewing each other. Be prepared to introduce your partner to the class.

During the interview, discover:

1. Your partner's educational major and the college they attended.

2. The city your partner grew up in and at least two things they appreciate about it.

3. Why your partner chose to work in foster care licensing.

4. Your partner's professional goals for the next five years.

Activity B: Seven Professional Practices for Licensing

Directions:

- As a group, using your assigned professional practice, answer the following question:
How are Licensing Specialists involved in the seven professional practices?
- Be prepared to discuss with the class.

1. Engaging the family

2. Partnering with all involved

3. Information-gathering

4. Assessing and understanding information

5. Planning for child safety

6. Planning for family change

7. Monitoring and adapting Case Plans

Family-Centered Practice

In order for the practice model to be effective, it is necessary to maintain family-centered practice, which supports respect and engagement.

The seven professional practices and family-centered practice provide a frame for work in Child Welfare.

Care of Children, Quality Parenting, and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (s. 409.145, F.S.):

- a. Prevention of separation of children from their families
 - b. Intervention to allow children to remain safely in their own homes
 - c. Reunification of families who have had children removed from their care
 - d. Safety for children who are separated from their families by providing alternative emergency or longer-term parenting arrangements
 - e. Well-being of children through emphasis on maintaining educational stability and providing timely health care
 - f. Permanency for children for whom reunification with their families is not possible or is not in the best interest of the child
 - g. The transition to independence and self-sufficiency for older children who remain in foster care through adolescence
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The Goal of Foster Care Licensing

The goal of foster home licensure is to ensure the physical and emotional safety and overall well-being of children who have been removed from their families and must be cared for by people with whom they have relative or no familial connection.

Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)

A child in foster care shall be placed only with a caregiver who:

- has the ability to care for the child.
- is willing to accept responsibility for providing care.
- is willing and able to learn about and be respectful of the child's culture, religion and ethnicity, special physical or psychological needs, any circumstances unique to the child, and family relationships.

Show Time – Video Review



Watch About the *Quality Parenting Initiative & Being a 21st Century Foster Parent*. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

1. *What are your overall impressions of the video?*

2. *What messages does the video convey about foster parents, professionals, and partners?*

Four Key Components of QPI

1. Respected Partners
2. Nurturing Children
3. Supporting Families
4. Strengthening Communities

Licensing Specialists - Seven Primary Roles

1. **The Partner (Professional Practice - Partnering with all involved, planning for family change):** The Licensing Specialist is responsible for partnering with many professionals, foster parents, and the children in their care.
2. **The Regulator (Professional Practice - Planning for child safety):** The Licensing Specialist must ensure that safety provisions are intact, policies are followed, and critical goals are embraced by foster parents.
3. **The Assessor (Professional Practice - Information gathering, assessing and understanding information):** The Licensing Specialist is responsible for the initial licensing, on-going assessment, and continued licensing of foster parents.
4. **The Mentor (Professional Practice - Engaging the family):** The Licensing Specialist must build relationships with foster parents. They must be the teacher, coach, and advocate for foster parents. They must be able to identify concerns and determine the best course of action for foster parents so that they may grow and stretch themselves.
5. **The Record Keeper (Professional Practice - Monitoring and adapting to Case Plans):** The Licensing Specialist is responsible for documenting all interactions and observations with foster parents and children. They must enter information in the official statewide automated system and other required record keeping practices and be able to locate case information for themselves and for the foster parents.
6. **The Communicator (Professional Practice - Monitoring and adapting to Case Plans):** The Licensing Specialist is responsible for recruiting, licensing, and retaining foster parents, maintaining customer service, managing conflicts, and advocating for foster parents and the children in their care. The Licensing Specialist is also responsible for communicating with partners and actively supporting placement stability. They are the bridge between the foster parents and the other partners in the system.
7. **The Match-Maker (Professional Practice - Planning for family change):** The Licensing Specialist may match or work in conjunction with other partners when a child is in need of a placement. They must also develop and maintain a precise family profile for each foster home. They must also remind foster parents to stay within their profile but work on expanding their profile by showing them their strengths and expanding their view of children they are willing to accept.

Activity C: Developing as a Licensing Specialist

Directions: What are the qualities, skills, and knowledge a Licensing Specialist needs to successfully perform each role?

1. The Partner

2. The Regulator

3. The Assessor

4. The Mentor

5. The Record Keeper

6. The Communicator

7. The Match-Maker

Activity D: My Strengths and Needs

Directions: Working independently, complete the worksheet by answering the following questions. Debrief with the group.

Given each role that a Licensing Specialist plays, what are your personal strengths and needs?

1. The Partner

2. The Regulator

3. The Assessor

4. The Mentor

8. The Record Keeper

9. The Communicator

10. The Match-Maker

What are some ways you can turn your needs into strengths?

Show Time – Video Review



Watch *Voices of Youth*. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

1. *Why did they move so many times?*

2. *What did they share about how they want to be identified in a family?*

3. *What was characteristic of the homes they felt good about?*

4. *What made adjusting to foster care more difficult?*

5. *What did they need from professionals?*

6. *What did they need from foster parents?*

7. *What will you take with you from this video that will impact your work?*

Activity E: The Big Picture

Directions: Based on the video we just watched and the information you recall from CORE training, what do you think are the feelings and behaviors of children who enter foster care?

In the middle column “Feelings”, list some of the emotions or feelings that children might experience when coming into care for each of the referral reasons listed.

In the “Behaviors” column, describe how children might behave given each reason for referral and corresponding feeling.

Reasons for Referral to Foster Care	Feelings	Behaviors
Physical abuse		
Sexual abuse		
Neglect/Abandonment		
Emotional maltreatment		
Parent in jail		
Parent in hospital		

Collaboration

Child Protective Investigator (CPI)

Case Manager

Adoption Specialist

Independent Living Specialist

Children’s Legal Specialist (CLS)

Guardian ad Litem (GAL)

Community Partners

Unit 1.2: Licensing Laws

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain how law and statute protect children in licensed care.
2. Identify the focus of the licensing requirements in Chapter 39, F.S.; Section 409.175, F.S.; Chapter 65C-45, F.A.C., and DCF Operating Procedures.
3. Describe how Chapter 65C-45, F.A.C. maintains the integrity the licensing process.
4. Describe the different levels of licensure and placement types.

Licensing Laws and Policies

- Chapter 39, F.S.
 - Pertains to judicial proceeding related to children involved in the dependency system

 - Section 409.175, F.S.
 - Pertains to the state statutory language that governs the licensing of foster homes and child caring agencies

 - Chapter 65C-45, F.A.C.
 - Pertains to initial licensure and re-licensure
 - Contains the licensing minimum requirements
 - Maintains the integrity of the licensing process

 - Operating Procedures
 - Provides a framework for child welfare practices
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Multi-Ethnic Placement Act/Inter-Ethnic Placement Provision (MEPA)

- Prohibits the delay or denial of any adoption or placement in foster care due to the race, color, or national origin of the child or of the foster or adoptive parents.

- Requires states to provide for diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom homes are needed.

- Violations of MEPA could result in a loss of 2% to 5% of the state's Title IV-E funds. 42 U.S.C. § 671(b); 45 C.F.R. § 1355.38(f).

s. 409.175, F.S., Licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies; public records exemption.

This section of the law provides guidance on how to protect the health, safety, and well-being of all children in the state who are cared for by family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies. This section identifies the licensing requirements for such homes and agencies, and it provides procedures to determine if the requirements are being met.

Chapter 65C-45, F.A.C., Sections

- Background Screening Requirements
- Parent Preparation Pre-service Training
- Initial Licensing and Home Study
- Continuing Education
- Changes During the Licensed Year
- Re-Licensing
- Standards for Licensed Out-of-Home Caregivers
- Terms of a License
- Babysitting, Overnight Care, Extended Overnight Care, and Other Supervision Arrangements
- Foster Care Referrals and Investigations
- Administrative Actions, Appeals, and Closures

Levels of Licensure

The levels of licensure are classifications of the foster homes licensed by DCF. The levels include:

- Level I – Child Specific Foster Home for relative, non-relative, and fictive kin.
- Level II – Non-Child Specific Foster Home which is currently traditional foster homes.
- Level III – Safe Foster Home for human trafficking victims.
- Level IV – Therapeutic Foster Homes
- Level V – Medical Foster Homes for medical conditions.

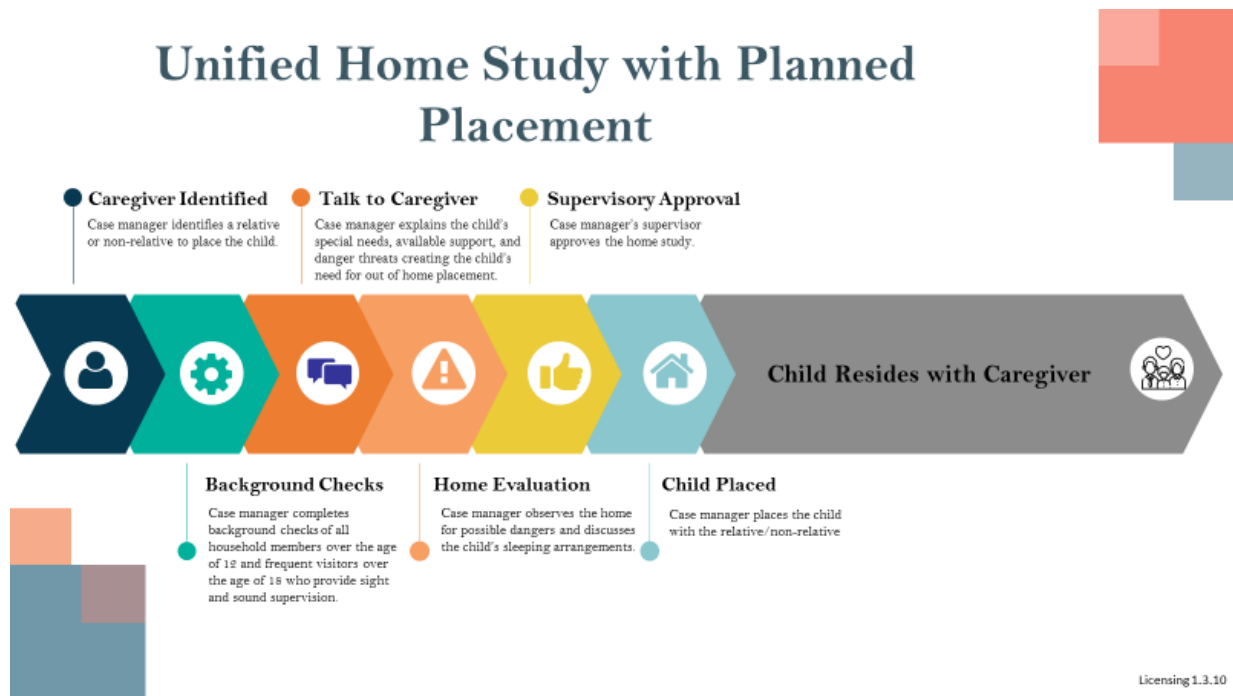
Unit 1.3: Overview of the Child Removal and Placement Process

Learning Objectives:

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1. Review a generalized example of the Child Removal and Placement Process.

Scenario – Overview of the Process



This scenario will apply to Levels of Licensure 2 through 5. Level 1 will be discussed in Module 3.

The process initially begins with the agency finding safe homes for placing children. This includes processing applications, conducting background checks, training, and placement visits to ensure that the homes and the potential foster parents are suitable.

When a child is in need of placement and a relative or non-relative is unavailable, the Child Welfare Professional contacts the placement staff at the CBC Lead Agency where they will review their approved licensed caregivers.

Based on the needs of the child, contact will be made with licensed caregiver(s) to discuss the child's needs and possibility of placement. Some of the questions that are considered, include:

- *What are the circumstances that caused the CPI to remove the child from his/her house and place with the relative/non-relative?*
- *Does the child have any special needs?*
- *If any, what are the danger threats that the caregiver should be aware of?*

The Child Welfare Professional also explains the caregiver’s rights and responsibilities, and the support and resources that are available.

When the placement is accepted, the child is placed with the licensed caregiver.

Unit 1.4: The Role and Skills of Assessment

Learning Objectives:

1. Define ongoing and mutual assessment.
2. Identify the phases of assessment and explain how these phases relate to the licensing process.
3. Recognize the importance of documentation and keeping a thorough and up-to-date file.

Assessment and the Licensing Specialist

Assessment is a mutual and ongoing process between agency and family. Assessment, from the agency perspective, is directly linked to outcomes for children.

- The Licensing Specialist needs to look at assessment from the point of view of a child and to look at assessment in terms of:
 - Why foster parents want to foster
 - Why agencies need foster parents
 - What children in care need and deserve
- Assessment is mutual because the agency and family must both know and learn about one another to see if the family fits the system:
 - If the fostering role will work for the family (in their view)
 - If the agency believes that the family can meet the system-specific needs
- Licensing Specialists are expected to:
 - ensure potential foster parents actively and effectively participate in required training.
 - determine the appropriateness of individuals to serve as foster parents.
 - verify the safety and suitability of the foster home/physical environment.

Stages of Licensing Assessment

Recruitment and Inquiry: This stage includes initial contact, pre-screening, initial documentation, orientation, and agency selection.

Initial Licensing: This stage includes all activities after pre-licensing until the time that initial licensing is awarded or denied. It includes pre-service training, written profiles, face-to-face interviews, prospective parent observations, references, and the Unified Home Study (UHS).

Placement: This stage includes all activities involved in the actual placement of the child.

Retention and Re-licensing: This stage includes all activities following the award of a license and placement of the child. It includes home visits, assessment of strengths and needs, ongoing support/training/ mentoring, and the relicensing checklist in FSFN.

The Skills and Knowledge of Assessment

Skills and knowledge to be able to perform these duties include:

- Assessing and Inspecting:
 - Capture through the completion of a home study
 - Conduct and document a thorough and complete home inspection
- Interviewing:
 - Interviewing strategies
 - Individual and group interviews
- Interacting:
 - Interpersonal communication skills
 - Engagement
 - Cultural competence
 - Verbal and non-verbal communication skills
 - Effective working relationships
 - Review assessment findings with individual subjects/families
- Interpreting:
 - Initial assessment of an applicant's suitability to serve as a foster parent
 - Formal and informal assessments to determine suitability to participate in foster parent training
 - Review and assess pre-screening application to serve as a foster/adoptive parent
 - Assess documentation and information to make an informed recommendation approving or denying an applicant's licensure as a foster parent
 - Determine motivation of applicant to serve as a foster/adoptive parent
 - Recognize indicators of domestic violence, adult and adolescent substance abuse, and adult and adolescent mental health issues
 - Background screening results
 - Information and findings in written documents
 - Information gathered from personal observations collateral contacts and interviews with the foster parent, household members, employers, and others that may provide critical information needed for assessment purposes
- Verifying:
 - Information and observations gathered during pre-screening activities
 - Information and observations gathered during assessments

- Techniques to verify the validity and reliability of information and evidence
 - Documenting:
 - Unified Home Study
 - Prepare licensing documentation for appropriate signatures
 - Input all rule-required information in SACWIS known as Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN)
 - Issue a license and maintain a copy
 - Tools:
 - Family profiles
 - Pre-screening assessment instruments/mandatory rule required forms
 - Formal licensing assessment instruments and protocols
 - Unified Home Study template requirements:
 - Background screening requirements
 - Pre-service training requirements
 - Home inspection criteria and standards
 - Required elements in the Unified Home Study (i.e., Motivation, Family History, Physical Environment, etc.)
 - Upload of required documents, such as copies of driver’s licenses, auto insurance, proof of income, medical forms, etc.
 - Recommendation to issue or deny the license
 - Child Welfare General Knowledge:
 - Characteristics of children in care
 - Statutory definitions of abuse, neglect, and abandonment
 - Expectations of foster/adoptive parents as outlined in the Partnership Plan
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Interpersonal Skills

- **Closed-ended, Probing or Yes/No Questions:** Allows Licensing Specialist to gather specific information from applicants/foster parents. Example: “What is your birth date?”
- **Open-ended Questions:** Allows Licensing Specialist to gather specific information from applicants/foster parents. Example: “Tell me about your childhood.”
- **Supportive Responses/Active Listening:** Builds trust between Licensing Specialist and applicants/foster parents; encourage applicants/foster parents to be honest in the interview. Example: “It sounds like you have thought of fostering for a long time.”
- **Clarification:** Used to maintain focus and organization during interview; assist Licensing Specialist in moving interview along and using limited time efficiently. Example: “You believe that you have a good marriage. What does good mean to you?”
- **Summarization/Redirection:** Used to maintain focus and organization during interview; assists Licensing Specialist in moving interview along and using limited time efficiently. Examples: “Now that you’ve talked about your childhood, tell me about your life as a married person?” (redirection) and “You’ve told me three things that you consider your strengths: your parenting experience, high energy level and positive relationship with the school system” (summarization).
- **Giving Options, Advice or Suggestions:** Allows Licensing Specialist to serve in a supportive role to applicants/foster parents. Example: “I can see that you have your heart set on fostering a newborn. Perhaps you can begin to think about the possibility of older children.”
- **Confrontation:** Necessary when Licensing Specialist feels that applicant /foster parent has been resistant or has **not** been completely honest in responses. Example: “It feels like you are not giving me all the details about the overnight guests in your home.”

Engagement

Activity F: Engagement Skills Practice

Directions:

1. Using the Phases of an Interview and the strategies to successfully engage foster parents we just brainstormed, form pairs to complete the activity.
2. Each person will conduct the role play as a Licensing Specialist interviewing a foster parent.
3. Practice introducing yourself and establishing a positive relationship with a foster parent.
4. Each person will have five minutes to complete the introductory interview as outlined below.
 - a. State your name and position.
 - b. Create an introductory sentence.
 - c. Describe your role.
 - d. Share your motivation to be a Licensing Specialist.
 - e. Find out the foster parent's name.
 - f. Find out how long they have been fostering.
 - g. Discover their motivation to foster.
5. After concluding the interview, the interviewee will provide feedback to the interviewer focused on how well they utilized engagement skills.

Documentation

Licensing Specialists ask many questions, observe interactions, and collect data, background checks documents, and profiles.

- Licensing Specialists must come to conclusions:
 - Is this family right for fostering?
 - Is this family right for this child?
 - Does this family need help?
 - Are there red flags?
- A Licensing Specialist may find through the process that they have not gathered sufficient information and must conduct further interviews and observations.
- It is important to note that narratives in the home study reflect interpretations of what is observed and heard. A careful review of all work is critical. Words do matter and when writing a narrative with conclusions, accurate documentation represents the professional, agency, child, and family well.
- Documentation can be one of the most helpful, yet one of the most limiting aspects of assessment.
- Consider that time and expertise has gone into developing forms and systems that allow for a thorough and systematic approach to assessment based on best practices and policy.
- It can be limiting if forms are viewed as checklists and Licensing Specialists do not reach a deeper level of assessment.
- All of the skills needed will grow with experience and dedication to do excellent work.
- When gathering information during the assessment process, it is important to check facts. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between the information provided and the information obtained during the verification process.
- Techniques to verify the validity and reliability of information and evidence include:
 - Check with references
 - Check with employers
 - Ask follow-up questions
 - Compare answers
 - Conduct background checks

Purpose of Documentation

- **Guide the licensing process:** Documentation provides an ongoing "picture" of the nature of your involvement with families, the progress of mutual assessment, support and development, and ensures regulatory requirements are met.
 - **Provide accountability for the agency and the Licensing Specialist:** Records should describe who is served, the kinds of services provided, the basis for all decisions, the degree to which policies and procedures are implemented, and other aspects of accountability and quality control. This legal record provides a statement about the quality of the Licensing Specialist's work that may decrease personal liability should legal action be taken against the agency or a caseworker.
 - **Provide accountability for the foster parents:** The licensing documentation not only sets regulatory requirements for foster families to follow, it also helps them to fully participate in the mutual assessment process.
 - **Serve as a therapeutic tool for the Child Welfare Professional and the foster parents:** Case records and other assessment opportunities can demonstrate the way in which the Licensing Specialist and family collaborate to mutually assess and define support and developmental goals and serve to evaluate the progress toward them.
 - **Organize the Licensing Specialist's thinking about the work:** Structured presentation of factual information leads to more in-depth assessment, support, and development planning. Poor recording and disorganized thinking go hand-in-hand and likely leads to poor service delivery to clients.
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Quality Record Keeping

The Licensing Specialist should:

- Retain and update records to assure accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, and completeness.
- Clearly describe strengths and needs as well as plans for support and development. Development goals should be stated in specific behavioral terms. The goal statements should be measurable, achievable, understandable, and verifiable.
- Maintain only objective information that is relevant and necessary to the agency's purposes. Facts should be recorded and distinguished from opinions. When opinions are offered, their basis should be documented.
- Record as much information as possible based on direct communication.
- Inform foster parents about the agency's authority to gather information, the principal purpose for the use of the information that they provide, the nature and extent of the confidentiality of the information, and under what circumstances information in records may be shared with others.

Traditional Licensing File

Traditional Licensing File Chapter 65C-45, F.A.C.

A traditional licensing application file shall consist of the following documentation (Note: Some of the requirements listed below may be waivable for Level 1):

1. Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children
2. Release of Information
3. Authorization for Release of Health and Medical Information for Prospective Foster or Adoptive Parents
4. Licensing Unified Home Study
5. Proof of Income
6. A Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care
7. Parent Preparation Pre-service training certificate
8. Parent Preparation Pre-Service biographical profile which shall be the demographic and narrative portions of the Unified Home Study as completed by the applicant(s)
9. Documentation of water safety training, if applicable
10. Confidentiality Agreement for Foster Parent Application
11. Verification of criminal history screening for applicant and household members including:
 - a. Affidavit of Good Moral Character
 - 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 the Florida Safe Families Network (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 (5) years
12. References, including:
 - 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
 - b. A current employment verification for each applicant
 - c. References from the adult children of each applicant
 - d. References from school personnel of each school age child residing in the home
 - e. References from the child care provider of any preschool age child residing in the home who is enrolled in a child care program

- f. References and documentation regarding any previous licensure as out-of-home caregivers
- 13. Family Documents:
 - a. Driver's license(s) and driving records for any household members or other persons identified who may transport children
 - b. Proof of vehicle insurance
- 14. Family Foster Home Safety Documentation:
 - a. Satisfactory home environmental health inspection report, in the areas of water supply, food holding temperature, plumbing, pest control, sewage, and garbage disposal
 - b. Radon testing results, when required
 - c. Fire inspection report (where required by local zoning laws)
 - d. Floor plan
 - e. Evacuation and disaster preparedness plans
- 15. The Acknowledgement of Firearms Safety Requirements form

Navigating Potential Roadblocks

Given all your roles and responsibilities and strict timelines, Licensing Specialists commonly experience the challenge of time management when some requirements are not met or there are additional steps to take for a requirement to be met.

During which phases do you think these challenges might occur? What are some potential roadblocks to completing the licensure process in a timely manner?

How do you think you can resolve common roadblocks?
