

# **Module 2: Recruitment and Initial-Licensing in the Level II Home**

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## ***Licensing Pre-Service Curriculum***



### **Participant Guide**

Office of Child Welfare

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***12/1/2019***

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<b>Module References:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Casey Foundation: <i>Breakthrough Series Collaborative</i></li><li>• Quality Parenting Initiative</li><li>• All legal references are available on Florida’s Center for Child Welfare website under the policies tab. <a href="http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/index.shtml#">http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/index.shtml#</a></li></ul>
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## **Unit 2.1:**

### **Recruitment, Inquiry, and Documentation**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify the different stages of assessment and explain how they relate to the licensing process.
2. Identify and explain strategies for identifying and recruiting foster homes that will accept traditional, enhanced, therapeutic, and medical placements.
3. Identify the steps involved in the inquiry process.
4. Describe in general the necessary qualities and requirements of a foster parent.

## The Stages of Assessment

Three main phases of licensing assessment:

1. **Recruitment and Inquiry:** This stage includes initial contact, pre-screening, initial documentation, orientation, and agency selection.
2. **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).
3. **Placement:** This stage includes all activities involved in the actual placement of the child.
4. **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.

## Assessment

- Assessment is mutual as 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), and if the agency believes that this family can meet the system specific needs.
  - Assessment is ongoing because of ongoing life changes within the family, the child, etc.
    - A family may become more or less prepared to foster a broader range of behaviors based on trainings they have received and capacity of children over time.
  - Assessment includes tasks that Licensing Specialists must take to ensure that required foster parent training, home studies, inspections, and evaluations are conducted and applied to licensing determinations.
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## Stage 1: Recruitment for Foster Care

- Children in care are in need of various types of placements depending on their physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral level of functioning.
  - Recruitment comes in different forms such as general, targeted, or child-specific recruitment activities.
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## History and Methodology of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)

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## Key Practice Themes from Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)

The nine key domains which led to improvement were:

1. Engaging in culturally sensitive recruitment
2. Creating partnerships with the faith community in recruitment
3. Learning about, educating, and engaging targeted communities in recruitment efforts
4. Recruiting new families willing to care for adolescents and sibling groups
5. Being responsive and attentive to the needs, questions, and concerns of resource families creating opportunities for resource families and birth families to talk to each other about the children in care
6. Ensuring strong partnerships with the agency and clear roles for resource families
7. Creating opportunities to listen to the voice of children and youth in care
8. Making certain that the perspectives of the resource family are heard in numerous ways
9. Finding unique ways to hear the perspectives of birth families and honoring their involvement in the lives of their children

## Eight Framework Components of Breakthrough Series Collaborative

1. **Messaging:** Public awareness must be raised about the needs of children in the public child welfare system, both in general and in specific ways.
  2. **Engaging Resource Families during the Recruitment Process:** The likelihood must be increased that families who express interest in becoming resource families will follow through with the process.
  3. **Supporting Families and Children through the Process and Preparing Them for Placement**
  4. **Licensing:** Qualified resource families must be licensed in a timely and supportive way.
  5. **Providing Services and Supports for Resource Families:** Resource families must have the services and supports they need to provide appropriate care for children and their families.
  6. **Developing Relationships and Supporting Involvement with the Agency Resources:** Families, youth, and birth families must be true partners with the agency.
  7. **Involving the Community:** The community must be an active partner in recruiting and supporting resource families, youth in care, and their families.
  8. **Staffing:** Appropriate and well-trained staff throughout the agency must be hired and retained to recruit, support, and engage resource families, children in care, and the children's families.
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## BSC Recruitment Strategies

### 1. Culturally Sensitive Recruitment

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## 2. Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations

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## 3. Educating and Engaging the Community

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## 4. Recruiting Homes for Youth and Siblings

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### Multi-Ethnic Placement Act

There are several Federal Laws that provide important and specific guidelines when placing a child in Out-of-Home Care. They are the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, and the Indian Child Welfare Act.

There are three basic mandates that come from MEPA:

1. Prohibits the denial or delay in placement of a child due to race, color, or national origin.
2. Prohibits the denial of anyone the opportunity to become a foster parent on the basis of race, color or national origin.
3. Requires states to diligently recruit foster/adoptive parents who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the state.

## **Activity A: Finding Foster Parents – A Recruitment Campaign**

**Directions:** Using the assigned topic, answer the following questions:

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### **Culturally Sensitive Recruitment**

- How can you partner with existing foster parents of color to improve engagement of families of color?

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- How can you develop and use culturally sensitive materials?

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- How can you respond to inquiries in culturally sensitive ways?

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### **Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations**

- How can you build relationships with faith community leaders?

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- How can you learn about the specific faith community ahead of time?

- How can you communicate with the faith community using multiple methods?

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- How can you focus recruitment efforts in the faith community on specific children?

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### **Educating and Engaging the Community**

- How can you target recruitment efforts to a local community or neighborhood using data as the foundation for decision-making?

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- How can you learn about the targeted communities' needs and beliefs?

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- How can you customize information for targeted communities?

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- How can you engage the business community and other community partners?

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### **Recruitment of Homes for Youth and Siblings**

- How can the team (Case Manager) engage youth in identifying possible caregivers?

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- How can you draw upon the pool of existing foster parents?

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- How can the team (Case Manager, foster parent) help youth build connections with caring adults?

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## Information-Focused Practices

### Initial Contact

At initial contact, families must be provided with the basic information regarding becoming foster parents. Specifically, that children:

- Range in age from infancy to 17-years-old
  - May have special medical, physical, or emotional needs
  - Belong to any ethnicity or race
  - May be a part of a large sibling group who need to be placed together
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### Minimum Requirements

The agency must elicit basic information from the individuals/couples about their family and home setting in order to determine if they meet minimum requirements.

- At least 21-years-old
- Good physical and mental health
- Adequate sleeping space
- Adequate income to support existing household expenses.

During initial contact, prospective foster parents must also be informed that they will be required to do the following:

- Obtain satisfactory health inspections.
- Participate in the required local parent preparation pre-service training which must be a minimum of 21 hours and a minimum of eight or more hours of training each licensed year
- Undergo background screenings to include, federal, state, local criminal checks, civil records checks, abuse registry checks, and sex offender and predator checks for adult household members 18 years and older who live in the home.
- Children in the prospective foster home ages 12-17, will also be screened through the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Florida Abuse Hotline.

## Orientation

All orientation sessions should give potential foster parents a basic understanding of:

- Who the children who need care are.
  - The roles and responsibilities of foster parents.
  - The process they will need to go through.
  - The next steps they will take on the journey.
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## Information, Forms, and Pre-Screening

Information MAY include, but is not limited to:

- Specific licensing agency information form
  - DCF release of information form
  - Affidavit of Good Moral Character form
  - Family profile information
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## **Activity B: My Agency Forms and Documents**

**Directions:** Review your local agency forms and indicate on your checklist which of the following information is included on your forms that are provided to prospective foster parents upon inquiry.

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### **Information about children:**

- ☐ Range in age from infancy to 17 years old
- ☐ May have special medical, physical or emotional needs
- ☐ Belong to any ethnicity or race
- ☐ May be a part of a large sibling group who need to be placed together

### **Minimum Requirements:**

- ☐ At least 21 years old
- ☐ Good physical and mental health
- ☐ Adequate sleeping space specific to number of bedrooms and beds are required
- ☐ Adequate income to support existing household expenses
- ☐ Satisfactory health inspections
- ☐ Proof of vaccinations for all pets in the home that require vaccination
- ☐ Participate in a minimum of 21 hours of parent preparation pre-service training and attend a minimum of eight hours or more of training each licensed year
- ☐ Undergo criminal background screening checks for those individuals 18-years and older who live in the home
- ☐ Home study requirement
- ☐ Home inspection

### **Expectations about Fostering:**

- ☐ The roles and responsibilities of foster parents
- ☐ The process they will need to go through
- ☐ The next steps they will take
- ☐ Quality parenting expectations
- ☐ Partnership expectations



State of Florida  
Department of **Clear** and Families

## APPLICATION FOR LICENSE TO PROVIDE OUT-OF-HOME CARE FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I / We \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant One: First Name Middle Name Last Name

also known as \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Two: First Name Middle Name Last Name

also known as \_\_\_\_\_

Residing at \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby apply for a license to provide Licensed Out-Of-Home Care for children in accordance with the provisions of Section 409.175, Florida Statutes, and agree to cooperate with the study of our home to determine if it meets standards of the Department for licensed out-of-home care for dependent children.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant One Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number<sup>1</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Two Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number<sup>1</sup>

(All applicants living in the home must sign the application in his/her own handwriting.)

This application may be withdrawn at any time the applicant(s) desires.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Pursuant to the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994 and the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, Section 1808, Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption, "race, culture or ethnicity may not be used as a basis for any denial of placement, nor may such factors be used as a reason to delay any foster or adoptive placement. Discrimination is not to be tolerated, whether it is directed toward adults who wish to serve as foster or adoptive parents, toward children who need safe and appropriate homes, or toward communities or populations which may have previously been under-utilized as a resource for placing children."

<sup>1</sup>Disclosure of this information is required for background screening according to Section 409.175(2)(k), F.S.

## Background Screening

At a minimum, screenings shall include:

- Statewide criminal and juvenile records checks through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).
- Federal criminal records checks through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
- Local criminal record checks through local law enforcement agencies and may include records of any responses to the home by law enforcement that did not result in criminal charges.
- Civil court records checks regarding domestic violence complaints and orders of protection via the clerk of courts internet database.
- Abuse Registry checks through the department's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) regarding child abuse investigations foster parent referrals.
- 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 must be made of those states, and the results of such requests included with the application documentation. This request is based on the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.
- Only abuse and neglect reports in which the person being considered for licensure was named as the "caregiver responsible" for the abuse or neglect may be used for initial licensing decisions.
- If the person applying is or was a licensee of the department and was named in any capacity in three or more reports during a five-year period, regardless of classification, those reports may be reviewed by the department for their relevancy as it relates to the licensing decision.
- All reports in which the person seeking licensure or re-licensure was named as the "caregiver responsible" must be considered for licensing purposes. For homes being considered for licensure for longer than one year, all abuse reports with any findings shall be considered.
- Federal and state checks obtained from fingerprint results.

- Juvenile records check obtained through the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.
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## Gathering Demographic Information

- What are their full names?
- Did they have any other last names or aliases before?
- What are the dates of birth and social security numbers for all household members?
- Did the prospective foster parent or household members ever live out of state? If so, how long ago and where?
- Do they have frequent visitors?
- Do they have adult children that no longer reside with them? If so, what are their names, dates of birth, addresses and contact information?
- Licensing Specialists must ensure that the demographic information, such as date of birth, address, phone number, and length of time in Florida is collected from the prospective caregivers, household members, and non-resident children of the prospective caregivers. In addition, they must verify that all social security numbers are correct.
- Determining if the prospective caregivers and household members resided in another state is important to ensure that there are no negative background histories that may impede the placement of a child. Licensing Specialists need to gather not only the names of all states previously resided in, but also when they began and ended residing in each state.
- Once the demographic information is obtained, Licensing Specialists can continue the UHS assessment process by completing the background checks.



## Activity C: My World Scavenger Hunt

**Directions:** Make contact with co-workers, supervisors, placement staff, etc. in your agency to gather the following information. Bring the scavenger hunt back to class completed and be prepared to share your world with others.

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Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

1. A list of all currently licensed homes with the following information:
  - a. The number of children they are licensed for
  - b. The amount of time they have been a foster parent
  - c. The kind of license they have
  - d. Their current waiver status
  - e. The number of children currently placed in their home
2. Information regarding all children currently in out-of-home care in your area that includes the **number** and **ages** of children:
  - a. In relative/kinship care, non-relative care
  - b. In non-relative care
  - c. In licensed foster homes
  - d. In group care
  - e. In residential placement

3. A profile (age, gender, special needs) of the children needing additional placement options.
4. The average length of stay in out of home care in your area.
5. Data on the number of moves children in care in your area experience.
6. Latest local QA results of the exit interviews completed by youth about foster homes, by foster parents about staff and by staff about foster parents.
7. From all of the results gathered above, make a list of strengths and challenges of your foster care system.

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## **Unit 2.2: Initial Licensing**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify the steps involved in the initial licensing process.
2. Demonstrate the strategies to gather information about the strengths and needs of the family.
3. Identify strategies for resolving common approval problems.
4. Explain the importance and process of collecting and documenting proof of compliance.
5. Explain grounds for denial and demonstrate the strategies to work with potential foster parents to resolve these issues.
6. Identify and discuss the impact of various state laws that affect interstate approval.
7. List and explain each of the minimum standards for foster homes.

## Stage 2 of Assessment: Initial Licensing

### Licensing Specialist's Job Tasks

- The Licensing Specialist assesses and analyzes information gathered during the licensing process to determine if an applicant meets licensing standards.
- Licensing Specialist's job tasks include:
  - Reviewing and evaluating the potential foster parent's family profile
  - Assessing background screening results and addressing any concerns, even if they are not disqualifying results
  - Conducting required home visits with potential foster parents
  - Conducting and documenting thorough home inspections
  - Collecting and evaluating references to assess suitability to serve as an effective foster parent
  - Securing potential foster parent signatures on licensing forms
  - Developing a written home study recommending or denying licensure
  - Submitting licensing file for approval or denial to the regional licensing staff
  - Providing the foster parent with the license upon receipt from DCF and notifying potential foster parent of intent to deny initial licensure

### Initial Licensing Standards

409.175, F.S. - Licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies; public records exemption serves 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 by providing for the establishment of licensing requirements for such homes and agencies and providing procedures to determine adherence to these requirements.

Licensing Specialists must be familiar with these statutory guidelines to facilitate the licensing process with prospective parents.

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## **Activity D: Deep Dive s. 409.175, F.S.**

### **Directions:**

1. Review the Deep Dive s. 409.175, F.S. worksheet below.
2. Using the computer or materials provided by the trainer, work with your partner or small groups to use s. 409.175, F.S. to fill in all of the missing information on the worksheet below.

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_ means any person, corporation, or agency, public or private, other than the parent or legal guardian of the child or an intermediary acting pursuant to chapter 63, that receives a child for placement and places or arranges for the placement of a child in a family foster home, residential child-caring agency, or adoptive home.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ means a private residence in which children who are unattended by a parent or legal guardian are provided 24-hour care. Such homes include \_\_\_\_\_ shelter family homes and \_\_\_\_\_ foster homes for children with special needs. A person who cares for a child of a friend for a period not to exceed 90 days, a relative who cares for a child and does not receive reimbursement for such care from the state or federal government, or an adoptive home which has been approved by the department or by a licensed child-placing agency for children placed for adoption \_\_\_\_\_ considered a family foster home.
3. A license under this section is issued to a \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ and is not a professional license of any individual. Receipt of a license under this section shall not create a property right in the recipient. A license under this act is a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_, and is not an entitlement.
4. Members of the family of the owner or operator, or persons residing with the owner or operator, who are between the ages of \_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_ years are not required to be fingerprinted, but must be screened for delinquency records.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ means any person, corporation, or agency, public or private, other than the child's parent or legal guardian, that provides staffed 24-hour care for children in facilities maintained for that purpose, regardless of whether operated for profit or whether a fee is charged. Such \_\_\_\_\_ include, but are not limited to, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, group homes that are administered by an agency, emergency shelters that are not in private

residences, and wilderness camps. \_\_\_\_\_ do not include \_\_\_\_\_, boarding schools, summer or recreation camps, nursing homes, or facilities operated by a governmental agency for the training, treatment, or secure care of \_\_\_\_\_, or facilities licensed under s. [393.067](#) or s. [394.875](#) or chapter 397.

6. The total number of children placed in each family foster home shall be based on the recommendation of the \_\_\_\_\_, or the \_\_\_\_\_ where one is providing foster care and related services, based on the needs of each child in care, the ability of the foster family to meet the individual needs of each child, including any adoptive or biological children or young adults remaining in foster care living in the home, the amount of safe physical plant space, the ratio of active and appropriate adult supervision, and the background, experience, and skill of the family foster parents.

7. If the total number of children in a family foster home will exceed \_\_\_\_\_, including the family's own children, an \_\_\_\_\_ of each child to be placed in the home must be completed by a family services counselor and approved in writing by the counselor's supervisor prior to placement of any additional children in the home, except that, if the placement involves a child whose \_\_\_\_\_ is already in the home or a child who has been in placement in the home previously, the assessment must be completed within \_\_\_\_\_ after placement. The assessment must assess and document the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ needs of the child and recommend the maximum number of children in a family foster home that will allow the child's needs to be met.

8. For any licensed family foster home, the appropriateness of the number of children in the home must be reassessed \_\_\_\_\_ as part of the relicensure process.

9. A person, family foster home, or residential child-caring agency may not provide continuing full-time child care or custody unless such person, home, or agency has first procured a \_\_\_\_\_ from the department to provide such care. This requirement does not apply to a person who is a \_\_\_\_\_ of the child by blood, marriage, or adoption, a permanent guardian established under s. [39.6221](#), a licensed child-placing agency, or an intermediary for the purposes of adoption pursuant to chapter 63.

10. The \_\_\_\_\_ shall adopt and amend licensing rules for family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies.

**The requirements for licensure and operation of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies shall include:**

1. The \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ of these homes and agencies and the responsibility which they assume for children served and the evidence of need for that service.
  2. The provision of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ opportunities, services, equipment, and \_\_\_\_\_ supplies to assure the healthy \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ development of the children served.
  3. The appropriateness, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and general adequacy of the premises, including \_\_\_\_\_ prevention and health standards, to provide for the physical comfort, care, and \_\_\_\_\_ of the children served.
  4. The ratio of staff to \_\_\_\_\_ required to provide adequate care and supervision of the children served and, in the case of foster homes, the maximum number of children in the home.
  5. The good \_\_\_\_\_ based upon screening, education, training, and experience requirements for personnel.
  6. The department may grant \_\_\_\_\_ from disqualification from working with children or the developmentally disabled as provided in s. [435.07](#).
  7. The provision of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ training for all foster parents and agency staff.
  8. Satisfactory evidence of \_\_\_\_\_ ability to provide care for the children in compliance with licensing requirements.
  9. The maintenance by the agency of \_\_\_\_\_ pertaining to admission, \_\_\_\_\_, health, and discharge of children served, including written \_\_\_\_\_ and reports to the department.
  10. The provision for \_\_\_\_\_ to encourage preservation and strengthening of a child's relationship with the family.
  11. The \_\_\_\_\_ safety of children served.
  12. The provisions for safeguarding the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ values of a child.
  13. Provisions to safeguard the \_\_\_\_\_ rights of children served.
- (b) The requirements for the licensure and operation of a child-placing agency shall also include compliance with the requirements of ss. [63.0422](#) and [790.335](#).

- (c) The department shall randomly \_\_\_\_\_ test a licensed foster parent if there is a reasonable suspicion that he or she is using illegal drugs. The cost of testing shall be paid by the foster parent but shall be reimbursed by the department if the test is negative.
- (6)(a) An application for a license shall be made on \_\_\_\_\_ provided, and in the manner prescribed, by the department. The department shall make a determination as to the good moral character of the applicant based upon screening.
- (b) Upon application, the department shall conduct a \_\_\_\_\_ study based on its licensing rules; shall inspect the home or the agency and the records, including financial records, of the agency; and shall \_\_\_\_\_ the applicant. The department may authorize a licensed child-placing agency to conduct the licensing study of a family foster home to be used exclusively by that agency and to verify to the department that the home meets the licensing requirements established by the department. Upon certification by a licensed \_\_\_\_\_ agency that a family foster home meets the licensing requirements and upon receipt of a \_\_\_\_\_ from a community-based care lead agency in the service area where the home will be licensed which indicates that the family foster home meets the criteria established by the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ shall issue the license. A letter from the lead agency is \_\_\_\_\_ if the lead agency where the proposed home is located is directly supervising foster homes in the same service area.



## The Licensing Process, s. 409.175, F.S.

The requirements for licensure and operation of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies shall include:

1. The operation, conduct, and maintenance of these homes and agencies and the responsibility which they assume for children served and the evidence of need for that service.
2. The provision of food, clothing, educational opportunities, services, equipment, and individual supplies to assure the healthy physical, emotional, and mental development of the children served.
3. The appropriateness, safety, cleanliness, and general adequacy of the premises, including fire prevention and health standards, to provide for the physical comfort, care, and well-being of the children served.
4. The ratio of staff to children required to provide adequate care and supervision of the children served and, in the case of foster homes, the maximum number of children in the home.
5. The good moral character based upon screening, education, training, and experience requirements for personnel.
6. The department may grant exemptions from disqualification from working with children or the developmentally disabled as provided in 435.07, F.S.
7. The provision of pre-service and in-service training for all foster parents and agency staff.
8. Satisfactory evidence of financial ability to provide care for the children in compliance with licensing requirements.
9. The maintenance by the agency of records pertaining to admission, progress, health, and discharge of children served, including written case plans and reports to the department.
10. The provision for parental involvement to encourage preservation and strengthening of a child's relationship with the family.
11. The transportation safety of children served.
12. The provisions for safeguarding the cultural, religious, and ethnic values of a child.
13. Provisions to safeguard the legal rights of children served.

## Licensing/Re-Licensing Checklist for 24-Hour Family Care

This form goes hand-in-hand with the Unified Home Study (UHS) and includes four sections in which the Licensing Specialist must verify compliance:

- **Forms**, such as the application, release of information, floor plan, and radon test
- **Observations**, such as storage of guns and alcohol, fire hazards, bedrooms, and pool safety
- **Information gathered and documented** in the home study, such as criminal history checks, references, medical history, and profiles
- **Other Requirements**, such as fire drills, transportation, and sleeping arrangements

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## Provider File Cabinet

The Provider File Cabinet includes the following categories:

- Certificates and Training
- License
- Provider Household Documents
- Required Signed Documents

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FOSTER CARE LICENSING CHECKLIST NAMING CONVENTIONS FOR FSN	
Please use the designated names for each licensing requirement that is <u>NOT</u> included on the <i>License/Re-License Checklist</i>	
FSFN CHECKLIST NAME	LICENSING REQUIREMENT
Law Enforcement Responses	Records of any responses to the home by law enforcement that did not result in criminal charges.
Dual License-Family Daycare	Licensed out-of-home caregivers that have contracted with a lead agency are authorized by s. 409.1671, F.S., to provide child care as a licensed family day care, as defined in s. 402.302(8), F.S., if they meet the requirements for licensing, with hours between 6am and 7pm, if applicable.
Pet Description	Description of any household pets, exotic pets, or livestock; description of animal safety plan, if needed.
Fire Hazards	The home shall be safe from fire hazards including: combustible items shall be stored away from sources of heat; exits, stairways and hallways shall be free of obstacles.
Outdoor Play Area	The home shall have a safe outdoor play area on the property or within walking distance. All outdoor play equipment shall be kept in good repair. If the home is located on a busy street, there shall be a safety plan for supervision.
Child's Religion/Faith	A licensed out-of-home caregiver shall cooperate with the child's case manager arranging opportunities for a child to participate in the faith of his or her choice or that is requested by the child's family.
Holiday/Celebration Participation	Explore prohibitions against celebrating holidays or birthdays.
Promotion of Child's Development	Licensed out-of-home care providers are expected to provide supervision, structure and daily activities designed to promote the individual physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development of the children in their home according to each child's age and developmental level.
Signatures	The UHS shall be reviewed and signed by the Licensing Counselor or designated Guardianship Assistance Program Specialist and their supervisor.  The prospective out-of-home caregiver(s) shall have read, completed and signed all documentation required for licensing as listed under Rule 65C-13.025(5)(b), F.A.C., and shall be provided copies of signed documents upon request.
Permanent Sleeping Arrangement	Children of any age shall not sleep on a living room sofa, cot or foldaway bed as a regular sleeping arrangement.
Water Safety Requirements	Children who are placed in licensed homes which are adjacent to any body of water or that have swimming pools shall be instructed in water safety regardless of age or swimming capability.

Pool Safety Requirements	<p>(1) Wading pools shall be set up and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. Wading pools shall be emptied and stored when not in use and shall be filled with clean water before each use.</p> <p>(2) All pools above or in ground shall be equipped with at least one (1) of the following life saving devices: ring buoy; rescue tube; flotation device with a rope; or a shepherd's hook of sufficient length to cover the area.</p> <p>(3) Hot tubs and spas not adjoined to an in-ground pool shall be required to have a safety cover that is locked when not in use.</p> <p>(4) Gates that provide access to swimming pools must open outward, away from the pool, and be self-closing and equipped with a self-locking device, the release mechanism of which must be located on the pool side of the gate and so placed that it cannot be reached by a young child over the top or through any opening/gap. A wall of a dwelling may serve as part of the barrier if it does not contain any door or window that opens to provide access to the swimming pool. A barrier may not be located in a way that allows any permanent structure, equipment, or similar object to be used for climbing the barrier.</p> <p>(5) <u>In Ground Swimming Pools:</u> A residential swimming pool must meet at least one of the following requirements relating to pool safety features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The pool must be isolated from access to a home by an enclosure that meets the pool barrier requirements of s. 515.29, F.S.</li> <li>b. The pool must be equipped with an approved safety pool cover.</li> <li>c. All doors and windows providing direct access from the home to the pool must be equipped with an exit alarm that has a minimum sound pressure rating of 85 dB A at 10 feet.</li> <li>d. All doors providing direct access from the home to the pool must be equipped with a self-closing, self-latching device with a release mechanism placed no lower than 54 inches above the floor</li> </ul> <p>(6) A swimming pool alarm that, when placed in a pool, sounds an alarm upon detection of an accidental or unauthorized entrance into the water. Such pool alarm must meet and be independently certified to ASTM Standard F2208.</p> <p>(7) <u>Above Ground Swimming Pools:</u> If the sides of an above ground pool are 4 feet tall, they may be used as the barrier for that pool. Above ground pools with steps or ladders shall have them secured, locked, or removed when the pool is not in use. If the pool cannot be emptied after each use, the pool shall have a working pump and filtering system.</p>
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## Licensing/Re-Licensing Checklist in FSFN

**Florida Safe Families Network** Print  Audit  Spell Check  Help 

or: Starnell, Andrew    Provider ID: 900003163    Checklist Type: **Initial License**    Create Date:

☐ Checklist Complete?    Completed Date:

### Checklist Items

Item	Due Date	Date Completed	Comment	Waiver Requested	Waiver Status	Action
<input type="checkbox"/> Affidavit Of Good Moral Character w/ Addendum	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Application For Licensure	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Abuse/Neglect Registry Check All HH Members	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Civil Record Check	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Home Study	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality Statement	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation Of Req Training	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	

**Florida Safe Families Network** Print  Audit  Spell Check  Help 

or: Starnell, Andrew    Provider ID: 900003163    Checklist Type: **Initial License**    Create Date:

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Item	Due Date	Date Completed	Comment	Waiver Requested	Waiver Status	Action
<input type="checkbox"/> Affidavit Of Good Moral Character w/ Addendum	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Application For Licensure	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Abuse/Neglect Registry Check All HH Members	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Civil Record Check	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Home Study	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality Statement	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation Of Req Training	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment History Check	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Health Inspection	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Evacuation Plan Posted	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Profile w/ Photos	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Arms Safety Compliance	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	
<input type="checkbox"/> FBI Clearance All Adult HH Members	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied	

<input type="checkbox"/> FDLE On All HH Members 12 And Over	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Income Verification	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Licensing Standards Checklist	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Law Enforcement Clearance On All Adults	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Release (if applicable)	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Agency Licensing Information (including out of county, region, or state)	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Out of State Abuse Registry clearance if less than 5 year resident of FL	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Over 5 Assessments (if applicable)	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership Plan	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Pet Vaccinations	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Placement History (I.E. Information From Exit Interviews)	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Radon Testing (if applicable)	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Licensing Foster Care Counselor	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Licensing Summary (A) Licensing Counselor	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Licensing Summary (B) Foster Parent	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Release of Information Form	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Re-licensing Standards Checklist	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> School References	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Vehical Insurance Verification All HH Vehicles	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Verification of legal docs: Marriage, Divorce, Death, Drv. Lcns	00/00/0000	00/00/0000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Denied

[Insert](#)

#### Waiver Status Comments

[Save](#)[Close](#)

## Proof of Compliance

Examples of types of documents include:

- Pet vaccinations from an actual veterinary clinic with seal
  - Paycheck stubs from employers or other verifiers of income, such as social security or retirement benefit statements
  - Auto insurance declaration page which identifies all covered drivers
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## Parent Preparation: Pre-Service Training

**The legal directive for preservice training is outlined in s. 409.175(14)(b), F.S., and CFOP 170-11, Chapter 16 or 65C-45, F.A.C.**

Pre-service training is more than delivering a training curriculum, it is an opportunity to mentor and coach prospective parents as they encounter information and experiences that may be exposed to for the first time. The opportunities for networking with other prospective parents is a key component of the training.

If the pre-service trainers do not serve as the family's Licensing Specialists, the trainers and Licensing Specialists need to develop a consistent process for sharing information about the prospective foster parent's participation and readiness for fostering.

Regardless of the curriculum used, all pre-service training should be conducted in a manner reflective of the mutual respect and level of excellence supported by QPI.

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## Exemptions for Parent Preparation Training

- If they have successfully completed parent preparation training equivalent to the parent preparation training offered by the supervising agency.
  - If the training was completed within the last five years.
  - If the prospective foster parent provides proof of successful completion.
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## Documentation

Completion of the parent preparation training is documented in the Providers Training module in FSFN. Other things that are documented in Provider Notes for the prospective foster parent include:

- If the prospective foster parent successfully completes the parent preparation training but does not continue the licensing process.
  - If the prospective foster parent commences but fails to complete the parent preparation training.
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## Written Profiles

- In some areas throughout the state, potential foster parents are asked to develop written family profiles as part of the process.
  - These profiles include information about the family (such as activities they like to do together) and information about each member within the family.
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## Required References

Required References:

- Three personal (cannot be related to applicant and must have known the applicant for two years)
  - School/daycare reference (on all children living in the home)
  - Two neighbors or if no neighbors, two community members
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## Partnership Plan

- The Partnership Plan is fully aligned with the Unified Home Study.
  - The Partnership Plan is reviewed with potential foster parents during the home study process and must be explained and assessed for each commitment.
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## Unified Home Study

The Unified Home Study (UHS) is an in-depth interview process that typically takes two months to complete.

- Once the potential foster parent signs an application to become licensed, DCF must approve or deny within 30 days of the application being signed, so the home study must be completed within this timeframe.
- The primary purpose of the home study is to determine that a potential foster parent meets the requirements and is suitable to provide care to foster children.
- Conduct a minimum of two face-to-face home visits in order to capture a full picture of the family and home.
- One visit must include the entire family, including children.

- During the first visit, conduct an initial walk-through to inform potential foster parents of the licensing safety standards, and to provide guidance on how to prepare their home for compliance purposes.
  - The second visit takes place shortly before the family is licensed and the potential foster parents should be fully prepared to accept children at this time.
  - Once the home visits have been completed, consult with the supervisor to determine if a family needs further consultation.
  - An environmental scan outside of the home in the neighborhood should also occur to assess for any safety concerns, such as a body of water.
- The following documents must be reviewed/completed with the potential foster parents during the home study process:
    - Application for License to Provide Out-of-Home Care for Dependent Children (CF-FSP 5007)
    - Release of Information (CF-FSP 5090)
    - Authorization for Release of Health and Medical Information for Potential Foster and Adoptive Parents (CF-FSP 5230)
    - Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care (CF-FSP 5229).
    - Confidentiality Agreement (CF-FSP 5087)
    - Acknowledgement of Firearms Safety Requirements (CF-FSP 5343)
    - Affidavit of Good Moral Character (CF-1649)
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## Why Use a Home Study?

The Unified Home Study is used for all types of homes studies including:

- Emergency placement (completed by CPIs)
- Initial license for foster home (including ICPC if required by sending state of OTI if out of county)
- Re-licensing a foster home
- Relative placement (planned placement completed by services worker)
- Non-relative placement (planned placement completed by services worker)
- Adoptive placement

## Unified Home Study Collaboration

The Unified Home Study is progressive in that it can expand and change based on the home and the child's situation. For example, a Case Manager completes necessary parts of the UHS when conducting a study of a relative's home for placement of a child.

The same home study is built upon for licensing if the relative later requests to be licensed as a foster parent. The study can then become an Adoptive Home Study if the foster parents apply to adopt. The Unified Home Study is also for conducting Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) studies for out-of-state requests.

Information the Licensing Specialist should gather when using the Unified Home Study includes:

- Household composition
- Assess needs of current children in the home
- Impact/stressors associated with additional children, such as child care or impact on work schedule
- Financial impact
- Coping skills
- Mental health and substance abuse history
- Home environment (indoor/outdoor) which includes sleeping arrangements, swimming pools, etc.
- Supports available to family
- Discipline techniques (how did they discipline their children/how were they disciplined as a child)

Potential parents should state the age, gender, race, and any special needs of child they wish to foster/adopt because parents need to feel comfortable with placement.

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## Writing a Unified Home Study

- Strengths as well as concerns that could potentially jeopardize a child's placement must be documented.
  - Refer to and incorporate information from supporting documents and observations into the narrative, such as :
    - A summary of the investigation into background checks and referral history
    - Verification from collateral references
  - Summarize all pertinent information from other documents.
  - Do not state in the home study narrative to see other forms.
  - Be careful and accurate in everything you write in order to protect the agency as well as to protect the child and family.
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## Completing a Unified Home Study in Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN)

- FSFN is a central repository that includes several types of home studies that can be entered into one location. The types of home studies which can be entered are:
  1. Initial Licensing Unified Home Study - assesses prospective caregivers who want to become foster parents.
  2. Re-licensing Unified Home Study - reassesses caregivers who are already licensed and are undergoing their re-licensure process.
  3. Addendum-Not Adoption Home Study - address the changes that have occurred in the household during the licensing year.
- Information collected for a home study can easily be applied to more than one type. For example, descriptions of the home and physical environment, interaction and relationships among family members, medical, education, employment, marital histories, parenting experience and skills, etc. are all part of comprehensive home studies for a variety of placement needs.
- The Unified Home Study helps to decrease the number of duplicate Person Provider entries. As part of the Safe Children Coalition (SCC) this is helped even further through the Data Entry Unit. When a Person Provider record needs to be added, a request for that addition is made to the Data Entry Unit through the SCC

Data Portal. Data entry staff do a thorough search of the system to make sure the Person Provider does not already exist and then add the new Person Provider if indeed they are not already in FSFN.

- When a Person Provider record is created, a type will also be assigned. Only one type may be assigned to a Person Provider record. The recommended Provider Type hierarchy is:
  - Foster care (licensed)
  - Adoption
  - Relative/non-relative

The Unified Home Study can be expanded over time and historical versions are retained in FSFN. It is also progressive and can be modified as a child's case moves through the system.

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## UHS Writing Tips

### 1. Use words that give an exact meaning.

Too often assessors use statements like:

- “They have a stable marriage.”
- “They have a good relationship.”
- “It is a nice house.”
- What do “stable, good, and nice” really mean? It would be more accurate to say:
  - “Like any other couple, Fred and Mary have had their ups and downs. They both agree that there have been few major disagreements and they have been able to negotiate or compromise each time. Neither can stay mad very long.”

- “While small in size, the Collins home is cozy, neat and comfortable. It is well-lit and has a fresh coat of paint inside and out.”

## **2. Get rid of extra words.**

Some writers are verbose and wordy. The reader must wallow through unnecessary words to get important information. For example:

- “Robert attended North High School and graduated in 1983. He played football, baseball, and basketball. Linda attended North High School and graduated in 1983. She was a cheerleader and was in the choir.”

With editing, unnecessary words and phrases are eliminated:

- “Both Robert and Linda attended North High School, graduating in 1983. Robert lettered in three sports, while Linda was active in cheerleading and choir.”

## **3. Do not use slang, “lingo,” or local jargon.**

This is not professional and others reading the assessment may not understand these terms. Phrases, such as “He’s a smooth talker”, may not be accurately interpreted. Use “He’s an articulate and colorful speaker” instead.

## **4. Give complete information.**

Some writers try to cut corners and leave out valuable information. Frequently, information regarding the foster/adoptive family’s neighborhood, culture, personal interests, and infertility issues is scanty and insufficient. A four-word sentence does not adequately relate information about important topics.

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## **Activity F: Clark Home Study**

**Directions:** Read through the home study example. Utilize the Clark Home Study worksheet that follows the home study and assess if the example home study addresses the Unified Home Study requirements. Check yes or no for each item on the worksheet.

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### **INITIAL LICENSURE HOME STUDY**

(Areas below need to be addressed on the initial home study and in **DETAIL**.)

#### **APPLICANT INFORMATION**

Joshua and Candy Clark first contacted the Recruitment Retention Specialist, Carmen Park, in Bay County to find out when the next pre-service classes were being held in the area. They began pre-service on September 26, 2015, and completed the class on December 5, 2015. Their pre-service teacher, Tracy Hill, began sending out reference letters in October 2015 and referred the packet to Kathy Fiorini in St. Petersburg in November 2015 to complete their initial licensure packet. The Licensing Specialist called and made an appointment to go out to the Clark home on November 13, 2015, to begin the licensing process. Joshua and Candy Clark are a married couple who live, along with Candy's minor children Stevie Simpson, age 15, and Mara Simpson, age 12, in the Lake Maggiore community. Joshua has two minor children, Jake, age 14, and Jim, age 11, who reside with their mother, Jocelyn Williams, in Tampa, Florida.

#### **DATES OF CONTACT**

The Clarks began pre-service training in Bay County on September 26, 2015, and ended on December 5, 2015. The first family consultation was conducted on November 13, 2015, and the second was conducted on December 6, 2015, with the Licensing Specialist. On December 1, 2015, the home health inspection was conducted by Joe Maison, from the Environmental Unit of the Pinellas County Department of Health. Their water sample was completed on December 7, 2015, and the test results were satisfactory.

#### **MOTIVATION TO FOSTER**

The Clarks have worked with the Department of Children and Families on several occasions to help children in non-relative placement situations over the years. They have no children together, but both have children from previous relationships. After the last little girl, Madison Young, left their home to be reunified with her biological mother, they decided to take the pre-service training class to become licensed as foster parents.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD**

Candy, Joshua, Stevie, and Mara live in a single-family home next door to Candy's parents. The home is located within walking distance of Lake Maggiore on a quiet street with many children. Their home has five bedrooms and two baths. Their children Mara and Stevie



have their own bedrooms. There is a room set up as a nursery and a guest bedroom that could be utilized for an older child of a sibling group that is unable to sleep in a crib. In November, the yard had some debris in the front and back left over from a do-it-yourself project that was being completed. The Licensing Specialist observed both areas on March 7, 2016, and saw that the front area had been changed. Mr. Clark had added a front deck to the home and a safe play area for children in the front yard with flower beds, a swing set, clubhouse for the younger children, and a basketball goal and skateboard ramp for the older children.

### **FAMILY HISTORY**

Neither Candy nor Joshua has ever been licensed as a foster home, nor has either parent ever adopted a child. They worked with a neighbor, a teenage mother, Ellie Strong, to care for her child, Courtney Strong, for four months. Ellie dropped Courtney off at the Clark home on April 25, 2015, and said to Candy, “This is your birthday present. Happy birthday”. The items she left for the baby were a molded diaper bag with molded clothes and a milk bottle that had spoiled milk inside with mold around the ring that held the nipple on the bottle. Ellie left the area for three days with no contact from her or her parents. Courtney lived with the Clark family for four months. When Ellie and her family came back to the community, she and her younger brothers were at the Clark home around meal time approximately four out of seven days a week. The Clarks learned that prior to Ellie leaving the baby with them, she had left Courtney with a teenager and her family for several weeks. It was reported that the family threatened to turn Ellie and her family in to DCF because of their actions. On a separate occasion a report was called in to the Abuse Hotline and Derrick Martin, a PI from Pinellas, investigated the situation. He recommended that Courtney be left with the Clarks, but Ellie’s parents took her back to their travel trailer the same day Derrick Martin came to the Clark home.

### **FOSTER MOTHER HISTORY**

Candy Stanton was born to John and Anita Stanton. The family lived in Birmingham, Alabama until Candy was eight years old. They then moved to Lynn Haven, Florida. She attended schools in the Lynn Haven area. When Candy was between the ages of eight and 12 years old she traveled with her maternal grandparents every summer. Their names were Natalie and David Mayland. While in middle school at age 13, she met her current husband Joshua Clark. They became best friends. During the ages of 13 to 16, she felt peer pressure to be perfect and disliked that period of time. At age 16, Candy moved back to Birmingham, Alabama to help her grandmother Natalie take care of her aging grandfather, David, who was in bad health. Her grandfather passed away while Candy lived with them. She completed high school in Birmingham and worked odd jobs at McDonald’s and Subway from the ages of 13 to 19. Her grandmother passed away on December 1, 2012, of old age. Candy reported in her family profile that the death of her grandmother was the greatest loss she had experienced in her life. She coped with this loss by relying on her family and faith for support. Prior to the age of 16, Candy was disciplined by either of her parents giving her a “pop” on the hand when she was young

and as she grew older they would remove her stereo or television from her room or they would ground her.

When she was 17 years old she met Donald Simpson and got married on June 20, 2001. She gave birth to her son, Stevie, on January 29, 2002. They moved back to Florida in February 2001 and ten months later they were separated in December 2002. Their divorce was finalized on March 30, 2002. Candy was awarded custody of Stevie.

After her divorce, she met George Douglas. A friendship developed and they started dating. Candy later found out she was pregnant. George left Candy when she was six months pregnant. On December 7, 2003, Candy gave birth to her daughter, Mara, who was two months premature. Because Candy was not married to George, she gave Mara her last name so that the children would know they were siblings and because George had made little attempt to contact Candy or his daughter. Mara was born with a rare genetic disorder called diaphragmatic hernia or no diaphragm. By the time she was four years old, she had had three heart attacks and had seizures until she was eight years old.

During the time her children were very young, Candy lived near her parents. They provided support to Candy by keeping the children while she worked and attended school. She worked two to three jobs to provide a home for her children. Candy also went to college at Gulf Coast Community College and Troy State University.

### **FOSTER FATHER HISTORY**

Joshua Clark was born to Mary and Roger Clark while they were living in Tallahassee, Florida. He has an older brother named Charles. A few months after Joshua was born, the family moved to Bay County. They lived in several different houses in the small towns of Callaway and Springfield. Joshua's mother became pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl who only lived two months. Her cause of death was SIDS. Joshua considers his sister's death the biggest loss or disappointment in his life. After his sister's death, Roger Clark divorced Mary when Joshua was approximately two years of age. She supported the family by working as a waitress at Hunts Oyster Bar in Panama City. She continues to work there today and has for the past 23 years. She has recently purchased her own gift shop called The Lady's Collectibles. The shop is located near the Hathaway Bridge in Panama City.

After the divorce, Joshua's maternal grandmother moved into the house to help raise the children. Joshua was disciplined by his grandmother by spankings and his mother by being sent to his room. Joshua's aunt was always around when they were growing up. Joshua reported that he remembered his aunt living across from a group home in Panama City and he met several good friends there. This situation made him want to have a big family and to be a foster parent so he could give other children a good home and the love they need.

Joshua went to elementary and high school in the Panama City area and enjoyed drawing. Joshua also enjoyed helping his uncle, Bobby Deal, do automotive upholstery at his shop named Bobby's Upholstery located in Springfield. He had a hard time with school in the ninth grade, especially in math. Joshua also attended Haney Vo-Tech where he took art, drawing, and airbrush classes.

While in the Army, on July 12, 2002 he married Jocelyn Strickner and they had two sons Jake and Jim. They moved to Tampa shortly after they were married because they have a VA hospital there and more opportunities. Joshua disliked the military because it took him away from his family for long periods of time. He would spend one day at home for every five days away. There were times when the troops would go out to the field for a month at a time. Joshua and Jocelyn were legally separated in 2011 and divorced in 2012. Joshua pays child support and sees his children six weeks during the summer and on the holidays. He reported that the relationship was strained with his ex-wife and this caused problems with him wanting to see the children more often than what is court ordered. Joshua's brother and his wife also relocated to Tampa and their wives became best friends. Joshua's relationship with his brother, Charles, was strained as well. To date, Joshua has had little contact with his brother. After the divorce, Joshua moved across the bridge to St. Petersburg.

### **CHILDREN IN THE HOME**

Stevie Simpson, age 15, and Mara Simpson, age 12, are Candy's children who reside in the home. Stevie attends Bay Point Middle School. He is active in band and in church. He reported to the Licensing Specialist that he thinks it is a good idea that his parents are becoming foster parents. He stated that he does not mind that the children will be a lot younger than him and added that he will just keep his bedroom door closed so that the little kids won't get into his stuff. Stevie reported that he wanted to help his parents teach the children about the Bible. Stevie has had little contact with his biological father, Donald Simpson, through the years and none in the past eight years. He does have a relationship with his paternal grandparents, who come and stay in the Clark home during the summer when Stevie is out of school. Although court ordered, Donald Simpson does not pay child support each month for Stevie.

Mara Simpson is now 12 years old and has had serious health issues during her life. She was born with a seizure disorder. She has not had any seizures in the past three years and takes medication. Mara reported that she is excited about her parents fostering and it is okay if the little kids get into her stuff. She is accustomed to her parent's god-children and cousins coming over and getting into everything. Mara receives SSI benefits for her disability and as of February 2016, she began receiving child support from her biological father.

The family considers their four dogs and one cat as additional children in their household as well. They are Loucie Lou, Velvet, Daisy, Scooter, and Mr. Man, whose nickname is

“Chopsticks” the cat. On March 7, 2016, when the Licensing Specialist observed the deck, which has recently been added onto the home, Candy reported that Scooter would be moving to her parents’ home next door because the younger dogs pester him. On that date, the Licensing Specialist observed that Scooter was still in the pen with the other three dogs. Scooter was not listed on the rabies vaccinations with the other animals. Candy reported they will provide verification of his rabies vaccination when the fenced pen is constructed at her parents’ home next door.

### **MARITAL HISTORY**

Joshua married Jocelyn on July 12, 2002, at the Bay County Courthouse. They have two children, Jake and Jim. Jake was born on October 13, 2002, and Justin was born on July 9, 2005. The marriage was happy for a while and they relocated to Tampa in 2006. Joshua attempted to help a friend, who had problems with drugs by moving him into the house with his family. He realized later that his wife Jocelyn and his friend were having a relationship that was more than “just friends”. Joshua moved out of the marital bedroom and his ex-friend moved into it. Joshua remained in the house for the children and paid Jocelyn \$200 weekly for child support. After a year, Joshua moved out of the house and gave it to Jocelyn and the kids. They were divorced in 2012. Joshua maintains a relationship with his two sons. In December 2015, his child support payments were placed on hold due to the disability application that he had started in August 2015. On November 9, 2015, Joshua was arrested for non-payment of child support benefits and a lump sum payment was made that day to catch his payments up-to-date. In December 2015, Joshua’s disability was awarded and his child support payments were reinstated. Joshua reported that he was angry at the ending of his marriage and he relied on his relationships with family and friends. He also worked more hours and days for a while to keep his mind off the pain he was feeling. Joshua’s two sons, Jake and Jim, visited his home for several years. The boys always acted like they loved Candy when they were in the home, but when they returned to their biological home, they acted very distant. Joshua reported that he believed his ex-wife attempted to turn them against Candy. As of December 2015, Jake and Jim have started receiving separate disability benefits due to Joshua’s disability in the amount of \$388.60 per month which takes the place of child support payments.

When Candy was 17 years old and living in Birmingham, Alabama, she met Donald Simpson and got married on June 20, 2000. She gave birth to her son, Stevie, on January 29, 2002. They moved back to Florida in February 2001 and ten months later they were separated in December 2002. Their divorce was finalized on March 30, 2002. Candy moved herself and son, Stevie, close to her parents in Panama City. At the time of her divorce, she reported feeling scared, relieved, and overwhelmed. She went to group counseling and group therapy to help with her feelings. During the past eight years she has had no contact with Donald. However, his parents call and also come to visit from Alabama during the summer. They stay in Candy and Joshua’s home when they are visiting.

After her divorce she met George Douglas. A friendship developed and they started dating. Candy later found out she was pregnant. George left Candy when she was six months pregnant. On December 7, 2004, Candy gave birth to her daughter, Mara, who was two months premature. She reported feeling scared and overwhelmed during this period, but she knew she had a young son to care for and she had to maintain her home for him and the new baby. George had never paid child support for Mara until February 2016 when she received a check in the amount of \$200 from George.

Joshua and Candy knew each other when they were 13 years old and in school together. While Joshua and his wife Jocelyn were separated in 2011 and he was living away from the marital home, he went back to Panama City to visit and he ran into Candy and their relationship picked up where it had left off as very good friends. Two weeks later, Candy went to St. Petersburg to visit and ended up moving in with Joshua. Although there were problems with Joshua's wife not wanting to give him the divorce, they finally divorced in May 2012. Joshua and Candy had a commitment ceremony on April 16, 2014. They were legally married on February 17, 2015.

#### **EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIP**

Candy's parents retired and moved to St. Petersburg. They live next door to them, so they see each other on a daily basis. Joshua's mother still lives in Panama City and they see each other frequently and call each other three or four times a week. Joshua has a strained relationship with his older brother due to his divorce. Joshua's father is deceased and prior to his death, they never had a real relationship. Stevie's grandparents come to the Clark home each summer to visit.

#### **EDUCATION AND WORK HISTORY**

Candy completed high school. She worked at Sallie Mae for four years as a financial analyst to help people get school loans for college. Candy was a building expert for five years at an architectural firm. She would draw up specifications for condos and hotels. She also worked in a satellite office for the Department of Transportation while attending college for her degree in Criminal Psychology at Gulf Coast Community College. She is currently a civil engineer working at home.

Joshua reported that he had a hard time with school in the tenth grade especially in math. He attended Haney Vo-Tech where he took art, drawing, and airbrush classes. After high school, Joshua worked odd jobs as a truck driver. He enlisted in the military and served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Georgia where he learned to be a mechanic. He reported that he enjoyed working on the army base and learned valuable skills. After he left the military, Joshua worked for a large construction company, Hillman Brothers, as a laborer and supervised equipment operators. Next, Joshua went to work for the county and moved to several different positions. Each job he obtained he earned more money. Joshua got hurt on the job and ruptured a disc in his back. He filed for disability in August 2015 and his benefits were awarded in January 2016.



**FINANCES AND EMPLOYMENT**

Joshua and Candy currently do not work outside the home. They have enough income and some extra to provide for their children and foster children who may be placed in their home. They completed a family budget which showed there is room enough to provide for a child several weeks without receiving a foster care board payment. On January 15, 2016, Joshua was awarded a lump sum payment of \$23,000 which was back-dated to the date of his application. He was also awarded a monthly payment of \$1,352.00 per month.

**CRIMINAL RECORD/FAHIS (local law, orders of protection, FDLE, FBI, AGMC)**

On November 9, 2015, Joshua was arrested by Pinellas County Sheriff's Deputies for owing back child support. He was also arrested for drug possession (according to local law background checks conducted in Pinellas County by the Licensing Specialist). Joshua and Candy were across the street from Bay Point Middle School, at a friend's home visiting, while they were waiting for their children to get out of school for the day. A neighbor called the Sheriff's Department about a strange vehicle being parked in their neighborhood. The Pinellas County Sheriff's deputies came and found that Joshua had his prescription drugs in a smaller unmarked container in his pocket. He was charged with felony drug possession along with owing child support payments since June 8, 2015.

Initially, Joshua contacted his attorney to notify Department of Revenue that payments needed to be placed on hold until his disability application could be processed. On August 6, 2015, he went to court and the judge ordered a hold to be placed on the child support payments.

On November 9, 2015 he was served with an Order of Contempt and Writ of Bodily Attachment along with an arrest. Joshua was taken to the jail for approximately nine hours and was released at 11:30 p.m. Candy and her parents worked together to get his prescription bottles from their home to the Pinellas County Jail to show proof that the medications found in his pocket in the unmarked container were in fact his prescription medication. Candy also paid the amount owed to the Department of Revenue. Joshua's court date was originally set for November 12, 2015, but they received a letter stating it had been rescheduled for December 28, 2015. His charges of drug possession were reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor. They were told that the judge would discharge the charges on December 28, 2015, but they might still have to pay court charges. They went to court in December about the criminal charges and were told that the charges had been dropped and no court costs were owed. They had to come back on January 24, 2016, to see the judge and find out what the status of the charges would be. On January 24, 2016, all charges were dropped and no court costs were required.

Abuse Report #2005-999999-99 was investigated by PI, Sandra Baker of Bay County, for threatened harm to Mara K. Simpson, age 18 months, from June 24, 2005 to August 2,

2005, when the report was closed with no indicators. Candy had taken Mara to the ER for lung congestion and seizure behaviors. When she got in to see a nurse, it was a different person than they were used to seeing and the nurse kept sticking Mara with a needle and Candy became irate because the other nurse could do it quickly and Mara did not have to be stuck more than once. Candy told the nurse to stop and get someone else. According to Candy, during the course of time they were in the ER, Mara kept acting like she was going to have a seizure and Candy kept telling her to look at mommy because sometimes this helped to stop the seizures from coming. The nurse did not like it when Candy had her stop sticking Mara with the needle and she called in the report.

Abuse Report #2007-555555-55 was investigated by PI, C. Morgan, District COC Worker, on Stevie C. Simpson, age six, as victim with some indicators of child-on-child sexual abuse, from March 11, 2007, until it was closed the same day March 11, 2007. According to the report, Stevie was a victim of child-on-child sexual abuse when another child attempted to stick his finger in his rectum. Stevie reported to his mother that this situation never happened to him. He reported that he would have known if someone was trying to stick something in his butt and this incident never happened to him. Candy reported to the Licensing Specialist there was another child in Stevie's class with the same name as him.

Abuse Report #2008-000000-01 was investigated by PI, Tom Close, on Mara K. C. Simpson as victim with threatened harm and neglect from April 12, 2008, until the report was closed on May 18, 2008, with no indicators. According to the report Mara, age five, came to school dirty because her mother did not make sure she was clean. Mara's body and clothing was filthy, her feet were encrusted with dirt, she had a bad body odor, and she did not wear underwear. Her mother Candy did not appropriately dress her for the weather. Mara had medical problems (hypo plastic left lung, gastric reflux, and seizures). She had missed 69 out of 150 days from Pre-K at Bayshore Elementary.

#### **LEGAL/FINANCIAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (divorce settlements, child support, child visitation, etc.)**

Joshua has been paying child support to Jocelyn Clark for his two sons, Jake and Jim, since their divorce. His disability benefits began in January 2016 in February 2016 portions go to Jake and Jim. Stevie Simpson also receives a portion of his disability benefits because Joshua provides over 50 percent of his care each month. Mara Simpson is already receiving SSI benefits for her own disability so she is not eligible for a portion of Joshua's SSA disability benefits. He gets to see his two sons for six weeks during the summer and on holidays. His two sons sleep in the guest room on a double bed during these periods of time. He was attempting to contact them by phone during the week and on their birthdays, but he reported that his ex-wife accused him of harassing her by calling so often.

**REFERENCES (adult, child, personal, neighbor, employment)**

Three personal references (one only knew Clarks two years), two neighbor references, and school references on Stevie and Mara were mailed out by Tracy Hill, Licensing Specialist during pre-service classes. These references were returned with positive responses except for one neighbor's reference who wrote "the outside of their house is cluttered and kind of dumpy looking". On March 7, 2016, the Licensing Specialist went back out to take pictures of the changes to the front of the home and observed a safe, child-friendly area along with a new deck across the front of the home with flower beds. An additional personal reference was obtained from a friend, Ron Toro, by phone on March 19, 2016, and a positive response was received.

**SENSITIVE ISSUES**

When the Licensing Specialist was in the home in November and December 2015, the Clark's smoked inside their home. The Licensing Specialist recommended to the Clarks in November that they needed to start smoking outside the home in order for the smoke and residue to start going away prior to them taking very young children.

While the Licensing Specialist was at the home in December 2015, there appeared to be some confusion with the daughter concerning the commitment ceremony date on April 11, 2014, and their marriage date on February 17, 2015. The Licensing Specialist spoke with Mrs. Clark regarding this matter and she stated due to Mara's age and the fact that she participated in the ceremony on April 11, 2014, she believed that they actually got married on that date. Candy reported that when Mara got older they would explain everything to her. They celebrate April 11, 2014, as their wedding anniversary.

Joshua has no contact with his older brother due to the strained relationship with his ex-wife. Charles and his wife blamed Joshua for the divorce. Joshua reported he has dealt with it and it is his brother's problem and not his own because he knows what really happened and why he did what he did.

Candy Clark is unable to have additional children due to having a hysterectomy due to a large tumor in her reproductive system. Joshua and Candy want a larger family and they have made a commitment to fostering and possibly adopting more children in order to have a larger family.

**GENERAL PARENTING**

Joshua and Candy reported having good relationships with Mara and Stevie. They are proactive parents. They try to work on issues with school and to work on issues with peers when they happen. They help the children develop empathy towards others when they have problems with their peers. Joshua and Candy are involved in the Band Booster Program at Bay Point Middle School since Stevie is a drummer in the band. Joshua helped them draw cartoon character backdrops that the band needed for an activity. In general,



Joshua and Candy have the time to devote to their children. They take advantage of precious moments to enjoy with the children.

During the licensing process, the Licensing Specialist contacted the PI in Bonifay and discussed the foster child, Madison Young, with him to get his opinion of the Clarks. He reported that they would probably be fine with foster children who they do not have a close relationship with, such as their neighbors (Ellie Strong and family), because he felt the Clarks got too close to the child, Courtney, and might have made some comments that got back to the grandparents which may be been the reason they removed Courtney from their home.

**SPECIALIZED PARENTING (ideas on discipline and childcare)**

Joshua and Candy Clark do not believe in spanking a child of any age. Joshua was spanked by his grandmother as a child. Candy was not spanked as a child. They are willing to participate in additional trainings for positive parenting ideas and maybe medical foster parenting when they are offered to them in the area where they live.

**ADOPTION ISSUES (if applicable)**

None

**CORE SKILLS OF PRE-SERVICE**

Candy and Joshua are able to be home with the children since neither one works outside the home. When asked about this situation they said that they have enough income coming into the home to cover expenses and enjoy a particular lifestyle. They added that they are able to take their children to school in the morning, do errands during the day, and be home every night with their children and participate in children's school and church activities. The Licensing Specialist explained the Rilya Clark Act regarding children under the age of three being required to go to daycare and that foster children are required to attend public school. The Clarks are aware of these requirements and stated they would follow these when required to do so.

According to the Licensing Specialists who taught the Clark's during pre-service classes, the Clarks participated actively during the class both verbally and in writing. They communicated to these counselors that they understood the policies of the agencies involved with the children. They reported they are willing to partner with all adults important to the children placed in their home.

The Clarks are able to assess the well-being of children in foster care because they have two children of Candy's living in their home and Joshua's two children that they see on holidays and during the summer. Joshua lived across the street from a group home when he was growing up and met several young men who became close friends during those years. Back then he wanted to help those kids have a better life and promised himself

that he would do so when he grew up. He and Candy understand that children above all else need love and understanding to grow up healthy.

Candy and Joshua have made an informed commitment to meet the developmental and well-being needs of the children placed with them. Candy's daughter, Mara, was born with health problems and she has been able to get the help necessary for her for her physical and emotional needs when others did not believe that Mara would live this long.

Candy and Joshua are able to develop partnerships with the people who are important to the children, such as birth parents, agency workers, therapists, and those who work within the court system, to develop and carry out plans for permanency. They have made a commitment to share parenting with the foster child's birth family and to be able to communicate effectively with them and the agency personnel. They know how to prevent disruptions and dissolutions of foster care placements or adoptions. They support concurrent planning for permanency. They know what to do to keep birth parents empowered and active in the continued parenting of a child. They are able to build alliances with birth parents and children and understand the problems that can come up with alliance building and shared parenting and know how to manage them. They understand different strategies for helping children and youth transition from foster care.

Joshua and Candy are loss experts because they have experienced this firsthand in their personal lives. They have experienced the loss of loved ones through death and divorce. They have helped their own children cope with divorce and separation from their other parents. They know strategies to help the children heal from loss through communication and sharing their feelings when they are ready.

Joshua and Candy are able to manage behaviors of children who are placed in their home by using different behavioral tools such as Stay Close, Pivot, and Ignoring Junk Behavior. They have chosen discipline strategies that assure children's safety, such as removing items from their rooms or privileges.

The Clarks plan to prepare life books for all the children placed in their home. This will keep the children connected to birth families and prior teachers, or foster parents when possible. They want to help children maintain and develop relationships that keep them connected to their pasts.

### **ATTITUDE TOWARD BIRTH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN CARE**

The Clarks reported, along with the children in their home, that they have empathy towards the birth families because of their loss. They realize that sometimes people have their children taken away because they have hit a troubled time in their lives and it is not because they are bad people. The Clarks have a strong faith in God. The Clarks hope to have contact with biological families to help them get through this rough time in their lives and they hope to help them get their children back.

**CONCLUSIONS (and bullet statements regarding):****Strengths of foster parents:**

- Joshua and Candy have experienced loss in their lives and have learned how to cope effectively and know how to help the children deal with loss.
- Joshua and Candy know how to care for children of varying ages because they have raised four children through adolescence.
- Joshua and Candy are concerned about the well-being (physically, emotionally, and spiritually) of the children in foster care.

**Needs of foster parents:**

- Joshua and Candy need to participate in the 15 and 30-hour positive parenting courses when they are offered in their area to get additional ideas for positive parenting methods.
- Joshua and Candy need to maintain a safe play area in their yard. The Licensing Specialist observed the play area March 7, 2016.
- Joshua and Candy need to smoke outside their home because they are heavy smokers and the smoke lingers in the home. This matter was addressed in November 2015 at the initial family consultation by the Licensing Specialist and again in December 2015 when the Clark's were smoking inside their home. The Licensing Specialist observed a designated smoking area outside the home on March 7, 2016, on the front porch that had been recently added to the home.
- They agree to sign a Safety Plan at initial licensure and at each re-licensure.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Joshua and Candy Clark's home be licensed for two children, ages one to two, either gender. This recommendation is based on the Clarks' desire for children ages zero to two. Licensing is recommending an increase in age of the children due to the threat that smoking poses on newborns to one year of age. Licensing will review and assess a change in age after 90 days and feedback from those who visit the Clark home.

**SIGNATURES**

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Foster Mother's Signature

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Date Signed

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Foster Father's Signature

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Date Signed

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 Licensing Specialist's Signature

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 Date Signed

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 Licensing Supervisor's Signature

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 Date Signed

9/14/2015 (retyped)

### **Clark Home Study Worksheet**

**Directions:** After reading the Clark family Initial Licensing Home Study example, work as directed by the trainer to evaluate the home study based on the Unified Home Study requirements. Check “yes” or “no” for each item.

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#### **The Unified Home Study must address the following:**

<i>Does the Clark Family Initial Home Study address:</i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
• Impact/stressors associated with additional children such as child care or impact on work schedule		
• Needs of current children in the home		
• Household composition		
• Financial impact		
• Coping skills		
• Mental health and substance abuse history		
• Home environment (indoor/outdoor) which include sleeping arrangements, swimming pools, etc.		
• Supports available to family		
• Discipline techniques (how did you discipline your children/how were you disciplined as a child)		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential parent states the age, gender, race and any special needs of child they wish to foster/adopt (parents' needs to feel comfortable with placement)</li> </ul>		
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## Twelve Assessment Categories – Home Study Best Practice

1. Attitudes and beliefs regarding foster care and adoption issues
2. Motivation to foster or adopt
3. Personal and emotional maturity
4. Stability and quality of interpersonal relationships
5. Coping skills and history of stress management
6. Level of openness in family relationships
7. Parenting skills and abilities
8. Ability to empathize with others
9. Understanding of entitlement issues
10. Ability and willingness to take a hands-on parenting approach
11. Ability to make and honor commitments
12. Religious affiliation and/or spiritual beliefs

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## Home Study Interviews

There are four phases within the interview process:

1. **Opening Phase:** The purpose of this phase is to establish rapport and a working relationship with the interviewee.
2. **Information Gathering Phase:** In this phase, Case Managers gather the needed information and reconcile and/or validate the information collected.
3. **Planning Phase:** This is an opportunity to discuss next steps. Prospective caregivers will want to know what to expect regarding the process, when the decision will be made regarding placement, if further visits/contacts will be warranted, and what other tasks, if any, they will need to complete.
4. **Closing Phase:** This is the last step in the interview process. Here Case Managers check and confirm their understanding of the information conveyed, discuss next steps, and follow-up with information requested.

## **Activity G: Home Study Interviews - First Interview**

**Directions:** Given each assessment category, review the sample questions you would ask a prospective parent to assess that category. For each category, write two additional questions that you could utilize.

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### **Attitudes and beliefs Regarding Foster Care and Adoption Issues**

**Sample Questions:**

- 1) What do you consider to be some advantages and disadvantages of teaming?
- 2) How do you define permanency? Why do you think permanency is defined as one of the goals of child welfare? How do you intend to address the permanency needs of children who enter your home?
- 3) What have you done to prepare your home, extended family, and community for the placement of children? What measures have you taken to ensure the child's cultural continuity and well-being?

**Additional Questions:**

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### **Motivation to Foster or Adopt**

**Sample Questions:**

- 1) Why have you decided to pursue adoption or foster care at this time? Why now? What influences have others had on this decision (e.g. friends, family members who are foster caregivers)?
- 2) What level of support do you expect to receive from your extended family or friends in your decision to foster or adopt a child? Explain.
- 3) What are things that "worry" you about parenting a child not born to you?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Personal and Emotional Security****Sample Questions:**

- 1) Have you worked toward a goal for a long time? What was it? Did you continue or give up? Why?
- 2) How do you manage obstacles? What has been the hardest situation you've ever faced? How did you overcome this situation? What was the outcome?
- 3) Have you ever felt unappreciated at home or on the job? Under what circumstances? How did you handle it?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Stability and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships****Sample Questions:**

- 1) Tell me about your relational history. How did you meet your spouse or partner? How long have you been together? What drew you to each other? What has life together been like?
- 2) Are there areas in which you strongly disagree? How do you manage or resolve disputes?
- 3) What challenges or problems have you encountered in your relationship? Can you describe them? How did you handle them?

**Additional Questions:**

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### **Coping Skills and History of Stress Management**

#### **Sample Questions:**

- 1) In the last five years, what changes have you experienced personally or as a family? How did you navigate through them? What strategies were most helpful to use in general for self-care?
- 2) Tell me about a time in your past when you experienced a traumatic event. Describe the event. What impact has it had on you then and now? How have you managed the aftermath over the years? What challenges has it posed for you?
- 3) Please tell me about the most challenging thing you've ever had to deal with as a young person or adult. As a couple. What was it? What did you do? How did it affect you? Your family?

#### **Additional Questions:**

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### **Level of Openness in Family Relationships**

#### **Sample Questions:**

- 1) Who do you include in your family? (Note: An ecomap can be effectively used to assist families in identifying their members and helpers).
- 2) During stressful situations, who helps you? Can you give me an example? Tell me about a time when you sought outside help. What were the circumstances? What was the outcome? What community resources have you used to help you solve a problem?
- 3) What experience have you had caring for, or relating to, a child who is not biologically related to you?

#### **Additional Questions:**

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**Parenting Skills and Abilities****Sample Questions:**

- 1) What do you most enjoy about parenting? What do you dislike?
- 2) How does parenting fit into your day-to-day life? How might it interfere with other activities you also enjoy doing?
- 3) How do you currently handle sibling issues such as jealousy, fighting, and competition? What conversations have you had with your children about additional siblings?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Ability to Empathize with Others****Sample Questions:**

- 1) How can you tell when people in your family are upset? Mad? Sad? Happy?
- 2) Why do you think parents maltreat their children? How do you think they feel?
- 3) How do you think children feel about their abusive parents?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Understanding of Entitlement Issues****Sample Questions:**

- 1) Have you ever cared for someone else's child? Were you able to parent the child as you would your own? Why or why not?
- 2) How do you plan to claim this child as part of your family?
- 3) Tell me about a time when you needed to make a decision that potentially might have had a favorable or an unfavorable outcome. What process did you use in your decision-making? Was it an independent decision, or did you rely on outside assistance? Who? What pressures were you up against? What was the outcome?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Ability and Willingness to take a Hands-On Parenting Approach****Sample Questions:**

- 1) Describe your parenting style. What works for you? In what way have you made changes over time? Have you had to extensively care for the child of a friend or neighbor or relative? Describe that experience and how it might be different if you were the child's parent.
- 2) How were you disciplined? What strategies did your parents use that you would consider effective? Ineffective? Appropriate? Inappropriate?
- 3) Tell me about a time you have had to give a consequence to a child. What was it? What was the outcome? How did you feel about it?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Ability to Make and Honor Commitments****Sample Questions:**

- 1) Tell me about a time when you wanted to quit something that became very hard for you. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- 2) Tell me about a time when a commitment to you was broken and how you dealt with those feelings.
- 3) Is there anything someone could do you would consider unforgivable, a behavior that would end the relationship?

**Additional Questions:**

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**Religious Affiliation and/or Spiritual Beliefs****Sample Questions:**

- 1) Tell me about your religious or spiritual beliefs, viewpoints, or practices. Are you currently affiliated with any particular religious or spiritual group? If so, please identify the group. How often do you congregate?
- 2) Who do you turn to for guidance with religious or spiritual matters? What coping strategies do you find most beneficial?
- 3) What rules or values regarding religion did your family of origin have for children?

**Additional Questions:**

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SOURCE: The Family Interview Guide developed by the Institute for Human Services for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program 2015.

## Follow-Up Interviews

- Follow-up interviews must have prepared questions with anticipated answers.
- Three keys to successful follow-up interviews include:
  1. **Understand the intent of the question:** If the supervisor suggests the question, ask him/her the reasoning behind it.
  2. **Make sure to understand cultural differences between oneself and the interviewee:** Examine the questions in relationship to any bias.
  3. **Know the range of possible answers:** Have follow-up questions for the possible answers.

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## Individual Interviews

- Do not use duplicative questions; use the opportunity to ask follow-up questions.
- Individual interviews allow the Licensing Specialist to better understand each person, to compare responses, and to assess the relationship.

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## **Activity H: Home Study Interviews - Individual Interviews**

**Directions:** Use the 12 Assessment Categories from the questions provided and developed in the previous activity. Given your assigned questions, determine why it is important, assess the potential answers, and provide follow-up responses.

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### **Attitudes and beliefs Regarding Foster Care and Adoption Issues**

**Question:**

What have you done to prepare your home, extended family, and community for the placement of children?

**Challenging Response:**

I am trying to keep this to myself until I know I am getting a child because my family is always getting in my business. This is my decision and I don't want any outside influences.

**Follow-up Response/Question:**

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### **Motivation to Foster or Adopt**

**Question:**

What are things that “worry” you about parenting a child not born to you?

**Challenging Response:**

Oh, I don't worry about that. Once me and the child meet, it will be us against the world. Unfortunately, children can't pick their parents so I'm ready to make up for those people.

**Follow-up Response/Question:**

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**Personal and Emotional Security****Question:**

How do you manage obstacles? What has been the hardest situation you've ever faced?

**Challenging Response:**

Definitely! I didn't think I would be here today with everything I have gone through. When I had the nervous breakdown they told me I wouldn't be able to work again, but I have been working for over a year.

**Follow-up Response/Question:**

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**Stability and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships****Question:**

Tell me about your relational history. What has life together been like?

**Challenging Response:**

Life for us has been perfect. We have not had any real problems. In fact, we never even disagree so in our home there is just peace and joy.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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### **Coping Skills and History of Stress Management**

**Question:**

Tell me about a time in your past when you experienced a traumatic event. Describe the event. What impact has it had on you then and now? How have you managed the aftermath over the years? What challenges has it posed for you?

**Additional Questions:**

Well, when I was young I was in foster care myself because I was physically and sexually abused. So I learned how to protect myself and meet my own needs. I admit that I don't get personally involved with many people but because of that my past does not control me. I want to teach other foster kids how to protect themselves.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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### **Level of Openness in Family Relationships**

**Question:**

What experience have you had caring for, or relating to, a child who is not biologically related to you?

**Challenging Response:**

I don't have much experience with kids and I never really wanted to have them. But as I realized that you guys need people to help take care of them, I felt like I have the space and I should do it. My nieces and nephews live out of state, so I haven't seen them or talked to them in years. There are kids on my street that I see playing.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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### **Parenting Skills and Abilities**

**Question:**

How does parenting fit into your day-to-day life? How might it interfere with other activities you also enjoy doing?

**Challenging Response:**

As you know I am very dedicated to my career and sometimes work long hours so to manage I do a lot of planning in advance and everyone has a schedule to follow. I do not neglect my children, but I believe that kids need to fit into your lifestyle and not the other way around.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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### **Ability to Empathize with Others**

**Question:**

Why do you think parents maltreat their children? How do you think they feel?

**Challenging Response:**

I just can't understand how someone who supposedly loves the child could hurt them. I just think they should have never had kids.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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**Understanding of Entitlement Issues****Question:**

How do you plan to claim this child as part of your family?

**Challenging Response:**

Well I haven't really figured that out. What should I do?

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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**Ability and Willingness to Take a Hands-On Parenting Approach****Question:**

How were you disciplined? What strategies did your parents use that you would consider effective? Ineffective? Appropriate? Inappropriate?

**Challenging Response:**

First of all, my parents did not play! When they want you to do something, you did it! If not, you got the belt or whatever they could grab easily and they wore you out. That is what taught me to be responsible and I have never been in any trouble as an adult. In the training they told us we can't spank the foster kids so this will be something new to me and the whole family.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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**Ability to Make and Honor Commitments****Question:**

Tell me about a time when you wanted to quit something that became very hard for you. What did you do? What was the outcome?

**Challenging Response:**

On one job I had, the supervisor was horrible and I wanted to quit, but really needed my job. So I lasted as long as I could while I looked for another job. Then when I knew I had one I walked in and packed up my desk and walked out leaving him with a huge job to finish. I never looked back.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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**Religious Affiliation and/or Spiritual Beliefs**

**Question:**

What rules or values regarding religion did your family of origin have for children?

**Challenging Response:**

In my family we all grew up in the church and still to this day I make sure that everybody in my household is in church every Sunday. If the families of these foster kids went to church, they wouldn't be in this situation. When they're with me I will teach them the right way to live and when they go home they can teach their parents.

**Follow-Up Response/Question:**

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SOURCE: "How to Screen Adoptive and Foster Parents: A Workbook for Professionals and Students" by James L. Dickerson, Mardi Allen, and Daniel Pollack (2011) pages 57-104.

## Assessing Characteristics, Strengths, and Needs

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## Successful Foster and Adoptive Parents

Successful foster and adoptive parents must be able to:

- Assess their individual and family strengths and needs; build on strengths and meet needs.
- Identify the strengths and needs of children and youth who have been abused, neglected, abandoned, and/or emotionally maltreated.
- Build on strengths and meet needs of children and youth who are placed with them.

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## **Activity I: My Strengths and Needs**

### **Directions:**

1. Complete the Licensing Specialist Strengths and Needs Self-Assessment by checking the most appropriate box to indicate your strengths and needs.
2. Share the results of your self-assessment. Listen while others share and assist them in developing some concrete measures he/she could realistically take to turn their needs into strengths. After everyone has shared and developed solutions, share what you consider to be your two greatest strengths from the worksheet.
3. Finally, share what you consider to be your two greatest strengths from the worksheet and share how you developed and maintain those strengths.

<b>Culturally Sensitive Recruitment</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Need</b>
Understand the importance of race, ethnicity, and culture		
Awareness of how governmental systems have lacked fairness and equity in the treatment of families of color		
Committed to finding explicit ways to mitigate language and cultural barriers		
<b>Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Need</b>
Able to build alliances with faith-based organizations		
Understand how altruism motivates faith-focused individuals and entities to be successful foster parents		
<b>Educating and Engaging the Community</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Need</b>
Work with community partners		
Target potential partners and help them understand both the need and the significance of the work, and support them in getting something out of the partnership		
Knowledge of local data regarding children in care and placement resources		
<b>Recruitment of Homes for Youth and Siblings</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Need</b>

Understand placement needs of older youth		
Respects the importance of sibling connections		
Respects the importance of maintaining personal connections		
<b>Licensing Requirements</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Need</b>
Knowledge of minimum requirements		
Familiarity with DCF foster care website, QPI website, and the National Foster Parent Association website		
Organization skills – timeliness with paperwork, emails, and returning phone calls		
Understand where to locate primary legal references for licensing		
<b>Home Study Assessment</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Need</b>
Interviewing skills		
Assessment and analytical skills		
Engagement skills		
Strengths-based perspective		

## Red Flags and Grey Areas

Chapter 65C-13, F.A.C.

- Recommendation for licensure shall describe the characteristics of children most appropriate for placement in the home. These characteristics shall include 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.

In order to help the Licensing Specialist explore any of these areas of concern more fully and accurately, it is recommended that the following questions be addressed by the Assessor and applicants:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen?
- How did you feel about it at the time it happened?
- What progress have you made in working on this issue since it happened?
- How do you feel about it now?
- How do you solve similar problems now as a result of your experience?

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## **Activity J: Red Flags and Grey Areas**

### **Directions:**

1. Evaluate the following red flag/grey areas to determine how you can use the mutual assessment process to address and/or correct the concern.

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1. Cleanliness - dirty dishes, clothing on floor, laundry, too clean
  2. Storage - boxes stacked up/clutter
  3. Visitors/guests always at house
  4. Broken furniture/hazardous
  5. Stuff in front/back yard
  6. Motivation to foster versus adoption/playmates for their children
  7. Discipline - none or too much
  8. Cultural or racial insensitivity
  9. Pets that children are afraid of that have no boundaries in the home
  10. Financial difficulty comments
  11. Children's area different/worse than other areas of the house (foster versus bio/adopted children, children versus adults)
  12. History of not accepting placements

### **Activity Notes:**

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## Completing Licensing Process on Time

- Utilize parent preparation pre-service training window to gather documents “along the way” which are built upon when putting the licensing requirements together.
  - Identify best methodology of requesting and receiving information (i.e., email, best day of the week if home visit is required, etc.).
  - Gather documents throughout the parent preparation pre-service training window.
  - Use the Licensing Checklist for 24-Hour Care as a guide for managing all of the tasks that need to be accomplished in a timely manner.
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## Common Approval Roadblocks

Some common roadblocks include:

- Following up with unanticipated data, such as disqualifying offenses or unknown disposition of a criminal case, or other challenging areas, such as difficulty submitting supportive documentation (i.e., proof of income).
  - Managing time to complete the licensing process in a timely manner. Following the timeline can be challenging when there are critical follow-up requirements, such as the unknown disposition of a criminal case. Licensing Specialists must also account in their time management for unanticipated follow-up activities (i.e., health inspection water sample test results that are pending or pending documentation requested for criminal history).
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## Laws that Affect Inter-State Approval

- **The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act** is a federal statute that was signed into law by U.S. President George W. Bush on July 27, 2006.
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- **Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)** is a federal agreement among member states and U.S. territories authorizing them to work together to ensure that children who are placed across state lines for foster care or adoption receive adequate protection and support services.
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- **Florida State Residence Requirements**
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For more information in ICPC visit the Center for Child Welfare website. They have a comprehensive page devoted to ICPC. The link is:

<http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/ICPC/ICPCFormsandResources.shtml>

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## License Awarded

Upon completion of the parent preparation pre-service training and the completion of a home study, the Licensing Specialist sends a recommendation to the state for licensure of the foster home.

- In some cases, the Licensing Specialist/agency may recommend that families wait to become licensed, and in very few cases, they may deny the potential foster parent for licensure.

- Upon acceptance, the foster home will be issued a license by the Department of Children and Families and the license will be valid for one year for initial licensing purposes.
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## Licensure Denial

Per 65C-13, F.A.C., 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.

- If a potential foster parent is denied a license, the agency must document the following:
  - Any disqualifying abuse reports and all reports of licensing violations and the outcome of the investigation.
  - Any deficiencies or conditions, other than abuse or neglect of the children, which compromise the safety or well-being of the children.
  - The length of time and frequency of the noncompliance with the licensing requirements or deficiencies in caring for children.
  - The date of written notification to the licensee as to the deficiency and time given to the licensee to correct the deficiency.
  - The licensing staff's efforts to help the licensee come into compliance.
  - Barriers, if any, which prohibit the licensee from correcting the deficiencies.
  - Consulting with the agency's attorney to determine legal sufficiency prior to writing and noticing a potential foster parent of a denial. 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.
  - Promptly notifying the potential foster parent by mail (certified mail preferred), identifying the reasons for the denial of the license, the statutory authority for the denial of the license, and the potential foster parent's right of appeal pursuant to Chapter 120, F.S.
  - Promptly recording the denial and reason(s) for denial in the Florida Safe Families Network.