

PROCEDURE VII-B3: Inquiries

07/2011

The County Supervisor or designee will:

- A. Assign foster care-only inquiries to the designated Resource Worker within three working days. (Notification of internet inquiries made by prospective foster parents will go directly to the designated supervisor, who will assign the inquiry to the designated Resource Worker).
- B. Assign inquiries regarding both Adoption and Foster Care to the designated Area Resource Worker within three working days, and ensure that the appropriate Adoption Supervisor will assign an Adoption Specialist as secondary.
- C. Relay adoption-only inquiries to the Adoption Supervisor within three working days.

The designated Resource Worker will:

- A. Enter information documenting all activities with the family beginning with Applicant Status (Inquiry) to the approval process in CHRIS. This includes all appropriate Provider Screens – General Information Tabs, Household Members/Requirements Tabs, Contacts Screen, Preferences Tab and Services Details Screen.
- B. Respond to all phone and internet inquiries within three working days of receiving the assignment from the County Supervisor (Inquiries made via the website will automatically populate the appropriate CHRIS county inbox the next working day).
 - 1) When an inquiry is made, give a brief explanation of the county foster care needs, correct any misinformation the caller may have, and explain the foster parent assessment process.
- C. Provide the family with an information packet within three working days after initial contact is made. The information packet will consist of:
 - 1) A letter that:
 - a) Thanks the family for their interest
 - b) Identifies a contact person
 - c) Indicates the date, time and location of the next information meeting in their county or, if applicable, a neighboring county that is hosting prospective foster parents from surrounding counties.
 - 2) PUB-406: Care, Commit, Connect
 - 3) PUB-409: What is DCFS?
 - 4) PUB-20: Open Your Heart, Open Your Home to Foster Care (if applicable)
 - 5) ~~Arkansas Heart Gallery brochure (if applicable).~~

Background check forms should **not** be mailed at this point in time. Copies of the brochures listed above can be obtained from the Foster Care and Adoption Units, ordered from the DHS print shop through the local financial coordinator, or printed directly from CHRIS Public.

- D. Within 5 working days after sending the information packet, contact the family via phone (if the family has not already contacted the Resource Worker) to:
 - 1) Ensure that they received the information packet.
 - 2) Answer any additional questions they may have.
 - 3) Determine if they will be able to attend the next scheduled information meeting.
 - a. If the family will be able to attend the next scheduled information meeting, no further action needs to be taken until that time.
 - b. If the family will not be able to attend the next scheduled information meeting, mail PUB-22: Standards of Approval for Foster and Adoptive Homes and PUB-30: Foster Parent Handbook and the background check packet to them with instructions on how to complete and submit these completed forms. The background check packet includes:
 - i. FBI fingerprint card
 - ii. CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check

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- iii. APS-0001: Authorization for Adult Maltreatment Central Registry
 - iv. CFS-341: Certification of Absence of Criminal Record
 - v. CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check
 - vi. CFS-419: Foster Family Support System Information
 - vii. CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Additional Requirements for DCFS Drivers
 - viii. VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
 - ix. VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
 - x. Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Manual
- c. See Procedure VII-C1 for background check processing information.
- E. If the Resource Worker is unable to contact the family after three phone attempts, send another letter to the family informing them that the Resource Worker has attempted to contact them and will not be contacting them further, but also welcoming the family to call or email the Resource Worker if they are still interested in fostering.

POLICY VII-C: FOSTER HOME ASSESSMENT PROCESS

07/2011

In order to ensure quality foster homes, DCFS will complete a thorough home assessment for each prospective foster family. The purpose of the assessment process is to educate prospective foster parents on the characteristics of children in out-of-home placement and evaluate their ability to meet those needs, as well as evaluate the applicants' compliance with the Minimum Licensing Standards and DCFS policy requirements for foster homes. The home assessment is a mutual selection process. It involves several components including, but not limited to, background checks, an in-home consultation visit, pre-service training, a home study, and ongoing consultation with the prospective foster parents to ensure that all appropriate criteria related to both compliance and quality are met. Prospective foster parents, with the exception of provisional foster parents, are highly encouraged to attend an Information Meeting before the In-Home Consultation Visit.

BASIC CRITERIA

Basic criteria for consideration in determining the appropriateness of foster homes include, but are not limited to the following.

Age - Applicant is at least 21 years of age and not older than 65 years of age.

Marital Status

- A. In a two-parent home, the husband and wife shall be joint applicants; each shall actively participate in the approval process, and shall provide verification that they are married. The marriage shall be stable.
- B. A person who is divorced must provide verification of that divorce and must be divorced for at least one year from the date on the court order (i.e., only verification of the most recent divorce is required).
- C. A person who is widowed must provide verification that he or she has been widowed for at least one year.
- D. Couples who are separated (i.e., a final divorce decree has not been issued) may not apply to be foster parents.
- E. A single person may apply to foster.

A minor may not be adopted or placed in a foster home if the individual seeking to adopt or to serve as a foster parent is cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state; additionally, there may not be any other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state. The prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite-sex and same-sex individuals.

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DCFS shall not place or permit a child in foster care to remain in any home where there are roomers or boarders, which includes foreign exchange students. Family members are not considered roomers or boarders. An assessment must be conducted on each family member's impact on the child and the child's impact on each family member.

General Physical and Mental Health - Members of the household must not have a health condition or disability that would interfere with the family's ability to parent the child. Each member of the household shall have a physical examination by a physician within six months prior to the approval of the home study on the prospective foster family, and annually thereafter.

Housing

- A. Space must be adequate to promote health and safety. Each bedroom should have at least 50 square feet of space per occupant.
- B. All firearms must be maintained in a secure, locked location and stored separately from ammunition.
- C. All water hazards and dangerous pets will be assessed. Safeguard measures will be implemented, as appropriate.
- D. Children of opposite sexes will have their own separate bedrooms if either child is four years old or older, except for a mother in foster care with her child(ren).
- E. Water must be provided by public water system or approved annually by the Department of Health (this includes septic systems). If a family's water source does not pass the Department of Health's inspection, bottled water may be used for drinking (purified water must also be used for bathing if infants and/or children under the age of 5 will be placed in the home) provided that the agreement to use bottled water is documented in the family's file.

Resources - The applicant must have sufficient resources to meet the financial, medical, physical, educational, emotional, and shelter needs of the child without relying solely on state or federal financial assistance (e.g., SNAP, SSI, SSA, etc.) to meet those needs (although these forms of assistance may be used to supplement a family's income). A recent check stub and the previous year's income tax return is required to verify income and employment. While the foster care board payment may be a resource for a child, foster parents should have sufficient resources to care for a child even without a board payment. The foster care board payment shall not be considered a part of the foster family's income.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

In addition to ensuring that homes meet the basic criteria, the Division shall only place children in approved foster homes where the foster parents and appropriate members of the household have been cleared through a series of background checks: the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, the Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry, the Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check and an FBI Criminal Background Check (with the exception that placements may be made in Provisional Foster Homes before FBI results are received). A household member is defined as any person who stays in a foster home for more than three cumulative months in a calendar year (e.g., an adult biological child of the foster parents who is home for the summer and holiday breaks or a relative who visits for six weeks twice a year).

Child Maltreatment Central Registry - Foster parents and all other members of the household age 10 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry. The Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check will be repeated every two years on all appropriate household members. If applicable, a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check shall also be conducted on each household member age 10 years or older in any state of residence in which they have lived for the past six years, and in their state of employment, if different, for reports of child maltreatment.

Adult Maltreatment Central Registry - Foster parents and all other members of the household age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through the Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry. The Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry check will be repeated every two years on all appropriate household members.

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State Police Criminal Record Check - Foster parents and all other members of the household age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through a State Police Criminal Record Check. The State Police Criminal Record Check shall be repeated every two years on all appropriate household members.

FBI Criminal Background Check - Foster parents and all members of the foster home who are 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, must also clear an FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check. The FBI Check does not need to be repeated.

Vehicle Safety Check - DCFS will check the driving record (violation points) for each prospective foster parent and other applicable members of the household. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points a foster parent may be allowed.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Foster parents must also complete the Division's pre-service training curriculum which includes 27 hours of Foster/Adopt PRIDE training and three hours of DCFS orientation prior to placement of a child in their home. Central Registry and State Police Criminal Background checks must be cleared and the FBI Criminal Background Check must have been submitted before a prospective foster parent can begin pre-service training. Foster parents must also complete CPR and Standard First Aid Training and receive certification in both areas prior to placement of a child in their home.

HOME STUDY

The home study (a component of the overall home assessment) assists in determining if a family is ready, willing, and able to become a suitable and safe placement resource for a child. At least two home study visits must be conducted in person with the foster parent applicants, including at least one visit to the home. The evaluator shall interview each age-appropriate member of the household.

The home study must evaluate a family's dynamics including but not limited to, motivation for wanting to foster, household composition, housing, safety hazards, income and expenses, health, education, childcare arrangements or plans, child rearing practices, daily schedules, social history, family activities, and support systems, (for more information see PUB-04: Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies). By learning more about these areas, the home study assists in ascertaining how members of a family function individually and as a unit, and, subsequently, helps inform the conclusions and recommendation as to whether a family should serve as a foster home.

To complete a successful home study, the Division uses ~~CFS-405: Foster Care/Adoption Services Family Assessment Information~~, the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE). SAFE involves a series of interviews guided by questionnaires and then evaluated through the use of the SAFE Psychosocial Inventory, and, finally, summarized in the final home study report. The use of these tools ensures a common evaluation process and promotes uniformity in the home studies across the state.

If at any point throughout the home assessment process a prospective foster home is found to be out of compliance with a licensing standard or a DCFS policy, the non-compliance issue must be addressed. However, if the Resource Worker determines that the non-compliance issue would not endanger the safety or well-being of children placed in a home, an Alternative Compliance or DCFS Policy Waiver may be requested as appropriate. (An alternative compliance is a request for approval from the Child Welfare Agency Review Board to deviate from a minimum licensing standard. A policy waiver is a request to deviate from a DCFS policy or procedure.) If the individual conducting the home study finds an area of non-compliance, he or she must notify the Resource Worker who should then take the appropriate steps as outlined in Appendix 9, to address the non-compliance issue.

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The successful completion of all home assessment components as outlined above will allow the Division to assess the quality and capability of foster homes. The home assessment process will also assist prospective foster parents in determining if fostering is appropriate for them and, if so, prepare them for their new role.

FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY, SOME NONAFFECTED PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

PROCEDURE VII-C1: Background Check Processing

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If the prospective foster family did not attend an Information Meeting, the Resource Worker must provide the family with a Background Check Packet which includes:

- 1) FBI fingerprint card
- 2) CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check
- 3) APS-0001: Authorization for Adult Maltreatment Central Registry
- 4) CFS-341: Certification of Absence of Criminal Record
- 5) CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check
- 6) CFS-419: Foster Family Support System Information
- 7) CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Additional Requirements for DCFS Drivers
- 8) VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
- 9) VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
- 10) Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Manual

The Resource Worker will:

- A. Submit the signed CFS-593, VSP-1, and VSP-2 to the Vehicle Safety Program Coordinator along with a clear copy of the driver's license for each prospective foster parent, FFSS member, and applicable teenage driver.
 - 1) Copy the front and back of the driver's license.
 - 2) Document on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen.
 - 3) The county office must receive the results of the Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program check before the family can be approved for training.
- B. Submit the completed CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check for each household member and FFSS member age 10 years and older, excluding children in foster care. The CFS-316 must be notarized. The Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check shall be repeated every two years.
 - 1) If applicable, a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check should also be conducted on each household member and FFSS member age 10 years or older, in any state of residence in which they have lived for the past six years, and in their state of employment, if different, for reports of child maltreatment.
 - 2) Route each completed CFS-316 to the Central Registry Unit.
 - 3) Document on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen.
 - 4) File a copy of the results in the foster home record. The county office must receive the results of the Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check before the family can be approved for training.
- C. Submit the completed APS-0001 to Adult Protective Services for each household member age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care. The APS-0001 must be notarized. The person must have no history of true abuse and/or neglect.
 - 1) Route each completed APS-0001 to Adult Protective Services.
 - 2) File a copy of the results in the foster home record. The county office must receive the results of the Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check before the family can be approved for training.
- D. Use CFS-341: Certification of Absence of Criminal Record to obtain written certification from the foster parents that any household member ages 10-17 does not have a criminal record. File a copy in the foster home record.

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- E. Submit the completed CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check for each household member and FFSS member age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care. The CFS-342 must be notarized. The State Police Criminal Record Check must be completed prior to requesting the FBI Criminal Background Check. The State Police Criminal Record Check shall be repeated every two years.
 - 1) Route each completed CFS-342 to the Criminal Records Unit.
 - 2) Document on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen.
 - 3) File a copy of the results in the foster home record. The county office must receive the results of the Criminal Record Check before the family can be approved for training.
- F. Process an FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check for all foster parent applicants and all members of the prospective foster home who are 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care. Encourage the prospective foster parents to submit the FBI Criminal Background Check as early as possible given that processing time may be significant. The FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check must be submitted prior to the family attending training; however, the results are not required before the family can attend training.

There are two options for completing the FBI check:

- 1) Electronic Fingerprint Scanning
 - a. Foster parent applicants do NOT need to fill out an FBI fingerprint card, as a request for electronic scanning will be done via CFS-342.
 - b. The Resource Worker will forward the completed CFS-342 to the Criminal Records Unit.
 - c. The Criminal Records Unit will use the CFS-342 to get a transaction number from the State Police.
 - d. The Criminal Records Unit will forward the transaction number to the Resource Worker.
 - e. The Resource Worker will forward the transaction number to the applicants.
 - f. Applicants must go to an approved Electronic Harvester to have fingerprints scanned. Check with the Resource Worker for the closest location.
 - g. Applicants must pay the electronic harvester fee. If applicants are approved and opened as a foster home, they may request reimbursement. [A receipt for the harvester fees and a DHS-1914 must be submitted to the Resource Worker's local financial coordinator for reimbursement processing.](#)
 - h. The Resource Worker will document the results on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen and file a copy of the results in the foster home record.
- 2) Ink Fingerprint
 - a. Foster parent applicants will complete CFS-342 and the FBI fingerprint card with good, unsmudged prints. Take care not to staple through the fingerprints on the FBI fingerprint card.
 - i. If the prints are not readable, the family will have to re-submit. Foster parent applicants may not use an Electronic Harvester if they have already submitted ink fingerprints and the attempt was unsuccessful.
 - ii. If a legible set of fingerprints cannot be obtained after a minimum of two attempts, a name-based FBI check will be conducted instead.
 - b. The Resource Worker will forward the documents to the Criminal Records Unit.
 - c. The Resource Worker will document the results on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen and file a copy of the results in the foster home record.

PROCEDURE VII-C2: In-Home Consultation Visit

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The Resource Worker will:

- A. Within 5 working days after clearances on all required background checks have been received, (FBI checks must have been submitted but not completed) contact the prospective foster family to schedule an in-home consultation visit with them. The in-home consultation visit should take place within two weeks of the scheduling call.
- B. During the in-home consultation visit:

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- 1) Provide all Information Meeting documents (aside from the Background Check Packet which should have already been completed) to the family if they have not yet attended an Information Meeting (see PROCEDURE VII-B4). Families are encouraged to attend an Information Meeting but are not required to do so.
- 2) Review and complete the CFS-446: In-Home Consultation Visit Report. The completed CFS-446 will serve as the first formal step in the application process.
- 3) Discuss the standards of approval for foster homes as outlined in PUB-22 and answer any questions the family may have.
- 4) Inform the prospective foster family that they will not be approved until they meet minimum licensing standards, DCFS policy requirements, and any other qualifications deemed appropriate.
- 5) Discuss training required prior to approval, including completion of CPR and Standard First Aid training and certification (for specific CPR and First Aid requirements, see PUB-30).
- 6) Review the Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program (ASVSP) with the family and have them complete the following forms, if they have not already done so:
 - a. CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Additional Requirements for DCFS Drivers.
Teenage drivers in the home will be subjected to the ASVSP and must be licensed if they will be allowed to transport children in foster care who are placed in the home. The result of the teenager's ASVSP report should not impact the decision to approve the home as long as the parents' ASVSP check is favorable. If teenager does not pass the ASVSP report, he or she will not be able to transport children in foster care.
 - b. VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
 - c. VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
- 7) If the Background Check Packet for the members of the Foster Family Support System has not been completed and processed, collect and begin processing the CFS-419: Foster Family Support System Information (one per FFSS member family) and each of the following documents for each appropriate member of each FFSS family (following Procedure VII-C1: Background Check Processing):
 - a. CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check
 - b. CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check
 - c. CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program (ASVSP)
 - d. VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
 - e. VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
- 8) Provide the family with the following documents and review/explain as necessary:
 - a. [CFS-363: Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Applicant Smoking Certification.](#)
 - ~~a-b.~~ CFS-404: General Medical Report (one for each person residing in the household)
 - ~~b-c.~~ CFS-409: Foster/Adoptive Family Preference Checklist
 - ~~c-d.~~ CFS-455: Request/Consent for Health Department Services, if applicable. This form should only be utilized if the family uses a well to access drinking water, a septic system, or if the Resource Worker has other concerns related to the drinking water, sanitation, or general health/safety conditions of the home and/or its surroundings that require an inspection by the Health Department.
 - ~~d-e.~~ CFS-480: Alternate Compliance of Water Supply Agreement, if applicable. [If the family will use bottled water \(and purified water for bathing if infants or children under the age of 5 will be placed in the home\), this must be noted on the CFS-480, signed by the foster parents, and updated annually. Neither a policy waiver nor an alternative compliance is required to accompany CFS-480 if the agreement to use bottled water is noted on this form and signed by the foster parents. Please note that an Alternative Compliance must be requested with this form; see Appendix 9: Alternative Compliance and Policy Waiver Protocol.](#)
 - f. [SAFE Questionnaire I](#)
 - ~~e-g.~~ PUB-30: Foster Parent Handbook
- 9) Inform the family that three positive confidential references are required.
 - a. Provide the family with three ~~copies of CFS-421: Reference Letter~~ [SAFE Reference Letter Templates.](#)

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- b. Provide the family with three stamped envelopes addressed to their area MidSOUTH Training Academy (c/o Foster Parent Program) or their contract provider agency as appropriate.
 - c. Inform the family that the individual writing the reference letter must mail it directly to the agency listed on the stamped addressed envelope provided. The prospective foster family shall not view the reference letters.
- 10) Begin completing CFS-475: Checklist for Compliance.
- 11) Determine whether the family would be willing to serve as an informal respite home in addition to a regular foster home (see Policy VII-G: Alternate Care).
- 12) If the family is being opened as a provisional foster home, also:
- a. Complete the CFS-452: Provisional Foster Home Verification with the family.
 - b. Provide a copy of the CFS-452 to the family and file the original in the foster home record.
 - c. Complete the CFS-474: Provisional Foster Home Orientation Checklist with the family.
 - d. Once all signatures are obtained, provide the family with a copy of CFS-474.
 - e. File the original CFS-474 in the foster home record.
- Provisional foster parents are not required to complete CFS-409. However, they must complete [CFS-363](#), CFS-404, CFS-455 (if applicable), and CFS-480 (if applicable) prior to the end of the six month provisional period but not necessarily before the relative child is placed in their home.

The Area Director or designee will:

- A. Sign the CFS-474: Provisional Foster Home Orientation Checklist.
- B. Return the signed CFS-474 to the Resource Worker.

PROCEDURE VII-C4: Pre-Service Training

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The prospective foster family will:

- A. Complete a minimum of 27 hours of Foster/Adopt PRIDE training and three hours of DCFS orientation (individually or in a group) prior to placement of a child. All make-up sessions shall also be completed in order for a family to fully complete pre-service training.
- B. Complete CPR and Standard First Aid Training and receive certification in both areas.

C. Submit the completed SAFE Questionnaire I to their Pre-Service Trainer on the first day of training.

~~C.D.~~ Submit the following completed forms to the Resource Worker before completing Pre-Service Training (do not submit to the Pre-Service Trainer):

1) CFS-363: Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Applicant Smoking Certification

~~1)2)~~ CFS-404: General Medical Report (one for each member residing in the household)

~~2)3)~~ CFS-409: Foster/Adoptive Family Preference Checklist

~~3)4)~~ CFS-455: Request/Consent for Health Department Services, if applicable. This form should only be utilized if the family uses a well to access drinking water, a septic system, or if the Resource Worker has other concerns related to the drinking water, sanitation, or general health/safety conditions of the home and/or its surroundings that require an inspection by the Health Department.

~~4)5)~~ CFS-480: Alternate Compliance of Water Supply Agreement, if applicable. ~~—Please note that an Alternative Compliance must be requested with this form; see Appendix 9: Alternative Compliance and Policy Waiver Protocol.~~

~~D.E.~~ Ensure that the individuals providing references have mailed their letters to the agency responsible for the home study before completing Pre-Service Training. Each person providing a reference should mail the reference letter directly to the appropriate MidSOUTH Training Academy (c/o Foster Parent Program) or the contract provider agency as appropriate using the pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelope provided (i.e., all reference letters shall remain confidential; prospective foster family shall not handle a completed reference letter).

The Resource Worker will:

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- A. Document the CPR Training and First Aid Training Effective and Expiration Dates in the Provider Household Members/Requirements Tab in CHRIS.
- B. File all completed forms in the foster family record (CFS-404; CFS-455, if applicable; CFS-480, if applicable).
- C. Enter prospective foster family preferences (based on their selections on CFS-409) in the Preferences Tab in the Provider Services/Admission Criteria Button.
- D. Attend the last training module and as many other training modules as possible.
- E. Hold the Area or County Orientation Session using the CFS-465: Foster Parent Orientation Checklist to guide the orientation session.

The Area Director or designee will:

- A. Attend the Area or County Orientation Session whenever possible.

PROCEDURE VII-C5: Home Study

The home study may be conducted by designated Division staff, by staff contracted through the MidSOUTH Training Academy or other contract providers, or by volunteers trained by designated DCFS staff. The evaluator will complete the home study in accordance with established SAFE protocols.

The individual conducting the home study will:

- A. Conduct an initial face-to-face interview with the prospective foster parent(s) using the CFS-405 applicants' responses to SAFE Questionnaire I (to have been completed and submitted by the prospective foster parents by the first day of pre-service training) to guide the conversation.
- B. Evaluate the first interview and note responses that will require further clarification and/or development.
- C. Conduct a second face-to-face interview with the applicant(s).
- D. During the second interview, provide SAFE Questionnaire II to the prospective foster parents who will complete this questionnaire in the presence of the home study evaluator. If a married couple is being interviewed, the spouses should complete and discuss their responses to the SAFE Questionnaire II with the home evaluator separately.
- ~~D-E.~~ Evaluate the second interview and note responses that will require further clarification and/or development.
- ~~E-F.~~ If necessary, conduct additional face-to-face interviews with the prospective foster parent(s) and/or other household members to further explore topics noted during the evaluation process.
- ~~F-G.~~ Interview each household member separately who is 10 years of age or older. Observe younger children and interview if appropriate.
- ~~G-H.~~ Review the three reference letters and ensure that all three letters are positive references. Using information collected during the interviews and from the SAFE Reference Letters, along with Desk Guide, complete the SAFE Psychosocial Inventory.
- ~~H-I.~~ Within 45 working days of the family completing pre-service training, complete CFS-405 and submit the final home study report to the Resource Worker for review and assessment.

The Resource Worker will:

- A. Review the final SAFE home study report ~~based on CFS-405 and~~ other assessment documents.
- B. Based on the review, submit the recommendation to approve or deny the home to the Area Director or designee within seven working days of receiving the final home study report.
- C. Document the Initial Home Study Completed Date on the Provider Service Details Screen in CHRIS.
- D. Notify the applicant in writing if a determination to approve or deny the home based on ~~CFS-405 and the~~ SAFE Home Study Report and other assessment documents cannot be completed within 60 working days of the family completing pre-service training and explain the reason.

The Area Director or designee will:

- A. Review and assess the completed ~~CFS-405~~ SAFE Home Study Report and other assessment documents as well as the Resource Worker's recommendation to approve or deny.

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- B. Approve or deny the home within seven working days of receipt of all final documents from the Resource Worker.

POLICY VII-E: REEVALUATION OF THE FOSTER HOME

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In order to ensure continued quality of all DCFS foster homes, the Division shall reevaluate each foster home's ability to care for children at least annually and whenever there is a major life change. Major life changes include:

- Death or serious illness among the members of the foster family.
- Marriage, separation, or divorce. (See more detailed information concerning foster parents who plan to marry or divorce in procedures below.)
- Loss of or change in employment.
- Change in residence.
- Suspected child maltreatment of any child in the foster home.
- The addition of family members (e.g. birth, adoption, aging relative moving in).

The completion and approval of all foster home reevaluations must be documented in CHRIS. If a foster home reevaluation is not completed and documented annually in CHRIS, any IV-E eligible child placed in the home will lose IV-E eligible claimability until the reevaluation of the family is completed and documented.

In addition to continuing to meet all Minimum Licensing Standards and DCFS Policy requirements as they relate to foster homes, foster parents must also complete a minimum of 15 hours of Division-sponsored or Division-approved in-service training annually after the first year of service. No more than five hours of videos, TV programs, books, or online courses for each foster parent will be accepted per year and must have prior approval by the Area Director or designee. Foster parents must also maintain current CPR certification and Standard First Aid training. Maintenance of CPR certification and First Aid training is in addition to the fifteen hours of continuing education and, therefore, cannot be counted as part of the annual 15 hour continuing education requirement.

Foster parents must complete their annual in-service training requirements before any additional children in care are placed in their home, unless an exception is granted. Foster parents who do not meet the in-service training requirements will be notified that they must complete the in-service training requirements within 60 days. No additional children will be placed in the home during this 60 day period.

If the foster parents' annual in-service training requirements are more than 60 calendar days overdue, then a reevaluation will also be required unless an extension to meet in-service training requirements has been granted by the Area Director. Extensions should be the exception and not the rule.

PROCEDURE VII-E1: Quarterly Monitoring of Foster Home

07/2011

The Resource Worker will:

- Monitor approved foster homes through quarterly visits to ensure compliance with Minimum Licensing and Division standards.
- Complete 475-F to document completion of each quarterly monitoring visit.
- File each completed 475-F in the foster home record and document in CHRIS.

PROCEDURE VII-E~~21~~: Annual Reevaluation of the Foster Home

07/2011

The Resource Worker will:

- ~~A. Monitor approved foster homes through quarterly visits to ensure compliance with Division standards.~~
- A. Conduct an annual reevaluation of the foster home using CFS-451: Foster Parent Reevaluation and CFS-475G. The completion and approval of all foster home reevaluations must be documented in CHRIS.
- B. Develop and maintain a record for each foster home that contains all information and documentation required by PUB-04: Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies. The foster home record order shall reflect the order in Appendix 4. This record shall contain:
- ~~1)~~ Current Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry Checks, Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Checks and Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Checks.
 - ~~1)2)~~ CFS-363: Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Applicant Smoking Certification (initial form as well as annual updates.)
 - ~~2)3)~~ CFS-404 (All originals as well as an annually updated one for each member must be included.)
 - ~~3)4)~~ CFS-409 (The original and any subsequent versions that reflect the family's most current preferences must be included.)
 - ~~4)5)~~ CFS-419 (Only the initial form is required unless the family elects to make changes to their FFSS, in which case updated versions of the form must also be included. Please note that all appropriate members of the FFSS must have current Child Maltreatment Central Registry and State Police Criminal Record Checks.)
 - ~~5)6)~~ CFS-446 (Only the initial form is required.)
 - ~~6)7)~~ CFS-451 (One for each annual reevaluation)
 - ~~7)8)~~ CFS-452 (Only for provisional foster families.)
 - ~~8)9)~~ CFS-455 (If applicable, the initial form and any subsequent ones if the family has moved must be included.)
 - ~~9)10)~~ CFS-462 (Only the initial form is required but Resource Worker is encouraged to review this form with the family annually.)
 - ~~10)11)~~ CFS-462a (One for each child placed in the home must be included.)
 - ~~11)12)~~ CFS-474 (Only for provisional foster families)
 - ~~12)13)~~ CFS-475 (The initial ~~form~~ CFS-475A and CFS-475B- as well as all completed portions CFS-475 for quarterly monitoring visits and annual s from reevaluations must be included.)
 - ~~13)14)~~ CFS-480 (if applicable, original and annual updates must be included); ~~Please note that an Alternative Compliance must be requested with this form and that this form and the accompanying Alternative Compliance must be updated annually.~~
 - ~~14)15)~~ In-service training record (as completed in CHRIS Training Screen)
 - 16) Annual foster home approval letter(s)
 - 17) All SAFE elements (e.g. three positive references, completed questionnaires, final home study report)
 - ~~15)18)~~ SAFE Reevaluation Tools
- C. Conduct an annual reevaluation of the foster home using CFS-451: Foster Parent Reevaluation, ~~and~~ CFS-475: Checklist for Compliance, and SAFE Reevaluation Tools. The completion and approval of all foster home reevaluations must be documented in CHRIS.
- D. Complete/update the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) with the foster parent.
- E. Submit the completed ITNA to MidSOUTH within 45 working days of completing the reevaluation.
- F. Document in the foster home record that the foster parent(s) have maintained current certification in both CPR and Standard First Aid and document in the Provider Household Members/Requirement Tab in CHRIS.
- G. Update any expired State Police Criminal Record Checks and Central Registry Checks for each member of the household or members of the FFSS and document in the Provider Household Members/Requirement Tab in CHRIS.
- H. Enter the foster parents' hours of in-service training on the Training Screen in CHRIS.

EXCERPT, FOSTER HOME POLICY

- I. Request an exception for any foster parent whose annual in-service training hours are 60 calendar days overdue, if applicable.
- J. Submit documentation with recommendation to approve or disapprove the home to the Area Director or Designee.
- K. Complete the Provider Reevaluation Screen in CHRIS and Request Approval for Area Director's review and approval.

The Area Director will:

- A. Review the CFS-451 and CFS-475 and Resource Worker recommendation to approve or deny the home.
- B. Approve the Resource Worker's Request for Approval on the Provider Reevaluation Screen in CHRIS.

When an exception to the in-service training requirements is requested, the Area Director will:

- A. Receive the request for extension to in-service training requirements.
- B. Review the quality of care provided by the foster family and the reasons for overdue training.
- C. Determine whether to grant an exception to the in-service training requirement for up to 60 calendar days.

POLICY VII-F: FOSTER HOME REOPENING

07/2011

In order to secure the best placement for each child in foster care, the Division seeks to maintain a large pool of quality foster homes. For this reason, the Division will consider reopening foster homes when situations arise where foster parents who previously self-elected to close their home and/or whose home was closed by the Division would like to reopen. Requirements vary depending on how long a foster home has been closed.

PROCEDURE VII-F2: Reopening a Foster Home That Has Been Closed More Than One Year but Less Than Two Years

07/2011

For former foster homes that have been closed for more than one year but less than two years and express interest in reopening, the Resource Worker shall:

- A. Follow the process outlined in POLICY VII-C: FOSTER HOME ASSESSMENT PROCESS and PROCEDURES VII-C1: Background Check Processing, VII-C2: In-Home Consultation Visit, VII-C5: Home Study, and VII-6: Final Approval of Foster Homes.
- A-B. Ensure that the foster parents have earned fifteen hours of continuing education for the year that their home was closed. Time spent during the In Home Consultation Visit and updating foster parents on new DCFS policy may be counted toward the fifteen continuing education hours. Document number of hours spent on the In Home Consultation Visit and policy updates on the CFS-446: In Home Consultation Visit Report.
- B-C. If, based on the Resource Worker's home assessment, the family does not need to complete pre-service training, inform the family that while they are not required to attend pre-service training, they have the option to do so.
- C-D. If the family elects to attend pre-service training, follow the process outlined in PROCEDURES VII-C3: Initiation of Pre-Service Training and VII-C4: Pre-Service Training.

POLICY VIII-G: FOSTER PARENT, PROVISIONAL FOSTER PARENT, AND RELATIVE ADOPTION

072/2011

The Division supports adoption by a foster parent or provisional foster parent, who has a well established relationship with the child in his or her care and who expresses an interest in adoption, without regard to any racial or ethnic differences if such a placement is in the best interest of the child. The Division also supports adoption by a relative, who is not presently caring for the child and who expresses an interest in adoption if such a placement is in the best interest of the child. Each family and child will be carefully assessed and prepared for adoption. The Division provides pre-placement services for relative adoptions to move children into adoptive families in a timely manner. A child in foster care placed in an adoptive home continues status as a child in foster care until finalization of the adoption and the adoption subsidy is initiated. Prior to the finalization of the adoption, post-placement services are provided and services to preserve adoptive families are offered after the adoption is finalized.

Before placement of a child in the home of the adoptive parent, DCFS will conduct a home study. The purpose of the home study is to evaluate the prospective adoptive parent's ability to meet the child's needs as well as evaluate their compliance with Minimum Licensing Standards and DCFS policy requirements for adoptive homes. If the prospective adoptive home is found to be out of compliance with a licensing standard or a DCFS policy, this non-compliance issue must be addressed. However, if the Adoption Specialist, or the individual conducting the home study, determines that the non-compliance issue would not endanger the safety or well-being of children placed in a home, an alternative compliance or policy waiver may be requested as appropriate. (An alternative compliance is a request for approval from the Child Welfare Agency Review Board to deviate from a minimum licensing standard, while a policy waiver is a request to deviate from a DCFS policy or procedure.) For more information on requesting an alternative compliance or policy waiver, see Appendix 9.

If there is a pending child maltreatment report on the family, the Adoption Specialist will stop proceedings until a determination is made. The investigation is to be reviewed and discussed with the Adoption Supervisor and the Adoption Manager.

Criteria for consideration in determining the appropriateness of adoptive homes include, but are not limited to the following:

Jurisdiction - DCFS will participate in the adoption of a minor who is in DHS custody or for whom the Court has retained jurisdiction only if either the person seeking to adopt the child, or the child, is currently a resident of Arkansas.

Residency Requirements for Adoption in Arkansas - The family planning to adopt may live in Arkansas or reside out-of-state and have an approved adoption home study from a licensed adoption agency in their state. The family's home study must be on file in the Adoption Services Unit.

Residency to determine jurisdiction over an adoption may be established in accordance with one of the three following sets of criteria:

- A. A child under the age of six months is a resident of Arkansas if:
 - 1) The biological mother resided in Arkansas for more than 4 months prior to the child's birth, and
 - 2) The child was born in Arkansas or in any city which adjoins the state line or is separated only by a navigable river from an Arkansas city which adjoins the state line, and
 - 3) The child remains in this state until the interlocutory decree has been entered. Or in the case of a nonresident adoptive family, upon receipt of ICPC approval, the child and the prospective adoptive parents may go back to their state of residence and subsequently may return to Arkansas for a hearing on the petition for adoption.

- B. A child over the age of six months is a resident of Arkansas if that child:
 - 1) Has resided in this state for at least six months, and
 - 2) Currently resides in Arkansas, and
 - 3) Is present in this state when the petition for adoption is filed and heard by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- C. A person seeking to adopt is a resident of Arkansas if that person:
 - 1) Occupies a dwelling within the state, and
 - 2) Has a present intent to remain within the state for a period of time, and
 - 3) Manifests the genuineness of that intent through an ongoing physical presence within the state together with indications that the person's presence is not merely transitory in nature.

Age

- A. Applicant is at least 21 years old.
- B. Applicant is a primary caregiver that is at an age so that it can be anticipated that the caregiver can actively parent the child into adulthood. This assessment will be made by the Adoption Specialist when determining what is in the best interests of the child(ren) to be adopted.
- C. Generally, at least a 10-year age difference and no more than a 45-year age difference between the child and adoptive applicant is preferred.

Marital Status

- A. In a two-parent home, the husband and wife shall be joint applicants; each shall actively participate in the approval process, and shall provide verification that they are married. The marriage shall be stable.
- B. A person who is divorced must provide verification of that divorce and must be divorced for at least one year from the date on the court order (i.e. only verification of the most recent divorce is required).
- C. A person who is widowed must provide verification that he or she has been widowed for at least one year.
- D. Couples who are separated (i.e. final divorce decree has not been issued) may not apply to adopt.
- E. A single person may apply to adopt.

A minor may not be adopted or placed in a foster home if the individual seeking to adopt or to serve as a foster parent is cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state; additionally, there may not be any other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state. The prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite-sex and same-sex individuals.

DCFS shall not place or permit a child in foster care to remain in any home where there are roomers or boarders, which includes foreign exchange students. Family members are not considered roomers or boarders. An assessment must be conducted on each family member's impact on the child and the child's impact on each family member.

General Physical and Mental Health - Members of the household must not have a health condition or disability that would interfere with the family's ability to parent the child. Each member of the household shall have a physical examination by a physician within six months prior to the approval of the adoption home study on the prospective adoptive family, and annually thereafter until placement of a child.

Housing

- A. Space must be adequate to promote health and safety. Each bedroom should have at least 50 square feet of space per occupant.
- B. All firearms must be maintained in a secure, locked location separate from ammunition.
- C. All water hazards and dangerous pets will be assessed. Safeguard measures will be implemented, as appropriate.
- D. Children of opposite sexes shall have their own separate bedrooms if either child is four years old or older, except for a mother in foster care with her child(ren).

- E. Water must be provided by public water system or approved annually by the Department of Health (this includes septic systems). If a family's water source does not pass the Department of Health's inspection, bottled water may be used for drinking (purified water must also be used for bathing if infants and/or children under the age of 5 will be placed in the home) provided that the agreement to use bottled water is documented in the family's file.**

E.

Please note that a household member is defined as any person who stays in a foster home for more than three cumulative months in a calendar year (e.g., an adult biological child of the foster parents who is home for the summer and holiday breaks or a relative who visits for six weeks twice a year).

Central Registry Checks

- A. Each member of the household 10 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, must agree to a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check in his or her state of residence and any state of residence in which the person has lived for the past six years, and in the person's state of employment, if different. These checks must be made prior to approval and shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued. The person must have no history of true abuse and/or neglect.
- B. Each member of the household 10 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, residing out of state shall have a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check, if available, in their state. These checks must be made prior to approval and shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued.
- C. Each member of the household age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through the Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry. The Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry check shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree is issued.

Criminal Background Checks

- A. Each member of the household 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, must agree to an Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check. These checks must be made prior to approval and shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued.
- B. Out-of-state adoptive families do not need to do an Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check if they have never resided in Arkansas. Adoptive parents and each member of the household 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, residing out of the state shall provide state police criminal record checks from their state of residence. These checks must be made prior to approval and shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued.
- C. Each member of the household 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, must agree to a fingerprint-based FBI criminal background check. These checks must be made prior to approval and need not be repeated. If a legible set of fingerprints cannot be obtained after a minimum of two attempts, a name-based FBI check will be used instead.

Any individual who has pleaded guilty or nolo contendere to, or has been found guilty of any of the following offenses is permanently disqualified from being an adoptive parent per ACA § 901-28-409(h)(1): capital murder, murder in the first or second degree, kidnapping, rape, sexual assault in the first or second degree, endangering the welfare of a minor in the first or second degree, incest, arson, endangering the welfare of an incompetent person in the first degree, and adult abuse that constitutes a felony.

No child in DHS custody shall be placed in a home where a records check reveals a felony conviction for child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, domestic battery, a crime against children including child pornography, or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault or homicide. No child in DHS custody shall be placed in a home where a records check reveals a criminal conviction for physical assault, battery, or a drug related offense, if the offense was committed within the past five years.

A prospective adoptive parent may request an alternative compliance for the following offenses: false imprisonment in the first or second degrees, permanent detention or restraint, battery in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd degree, aggravated assault, assault in the 1st or 2nd degree, terroristic threatening in the 1st or 2nd degree, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, interference with visitation, interference with custody, engaging in conduct with respect to controlled substances, distribution to minors, public display of obscenity, prostitution, promoting prostitution, criminal attempt, criminal complicity, criminal solicitation, criminal conspiracy, any felony or any misdemeanor involving violence, threatened violence or moral turpitude.

A prospective adoptive parent may request an alternative compliance for a felony conviction for physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense if the offense was not committed within the past five years.

If an applicant produces evidence that a conviction has been expunged or sealed, this information must be forwarded to OCC for review.

Resources - The applicant must have sufficient resources to meet the financial, medical, physical, educational, emotional, and shelter needs of the child without depending solely on state or federal financial assistance (e.g., SNAP, SSI, SSA, etc.) to meet those needs (although such forms of assistance may be used to supplement a family's income). A recent check stub and the previous year's income tax return are required to verify income and employment. While an adoption subsidy may be a resource for a child who meets the eligibility criteria, adoptive parents should have sufficient resources to care for a child even without a subsidy. The adoption subsidy shall not be considered a part of the adoptive family's income.

Other – The prospective adoptive family must be willing to meet the child's needs to have continuity with the birth family, if applicable, and if in the child's best interest. The family must also be able to appropriately deal with interference from the child's birth family. Geographic location of the prospective adoptive family should not present any risks for the child to be harmed by the birth family. Additionally if the prospective adoptive family plans to continue as a foster home, they must demonstrate that they will also be able to continue to meet their adoptive child's needs.

Pre-Service Training

- A. The applicant must complete pre-service training.
- B. The applicant must be willing to complete any further training in order to meet a child's specific needs.

Before placement for adoption, the Adoption Specialist shall compile and provide a disclosure packet to the prospective adoptive parents, which is a detailed, written, health history and genetic and social history of the child which excludes information which would identify custodial/non-custodial parent(s) or members of a custodial/non-custodial parent(s)' family. The information shall be set forth in a document that is separate from any document containing information identifying the custodial/non-custodial parents or members of the custodial/non-custodial parents' family.

The detailed, written health history and genetic and social history shall be identified as such, and shall be filed with the clerk before the entry of the adoption decree. Upon order of the court for good cause shown, the clerk of the circuit court may tender to a person identified by the court a copy of the detailed, written health history and genetic and social history.

All records of any adoption finalized in the state of Arkansas shall be maintained for 99 years. The Juvenile Division of Circuit Court shall retain jurisdiction to issue orders of adoption, interlocutory or final, when a juvenile is placed outside the state of Arkansas, unless the Court allows for finalization in the receiving state.

When a child in a pre-adoptive placement dies prior to the finalization of the adoption decree, the presumptive adoptive parents may be entitled to an adoption decree and birth certificate for the deceased child.

If the child's death is a result of abuse or neglect on the part of the pre-adoptive parent(s), the adoption decree will not be finalized through the Division.

FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY, SOME NONAFFECTED PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

PROCEDURE VIII-G2: Assessment and Preparation

072/2011

The Family Service Worker will:

- A. Ensure, prior to the permanency planning staffing, that the child's out-of-home placement record is up to date and that all attachments which are required for an adoption packet (see Appendix 2-B) are in the child's record, and are copied and forwarded to the Adoption Specialist within three working days of the permanency planning hearing.
- B. Send additional attachments to the Adoption Specialist once the initial adoption packet is completed in order to maintain current information until a decision is made.
- C. Document in the child's out-of-home placement record, and in CHRIS, the efforts to secure needed attachments and the reason for an attachment not being available.
- D. Provide information requested by the Adoption Specialist in the preparation of the child's adoption summary.
- E. Prepare the child for adoption and assist in preparing the foster parent, provisional foster parent, or relative for adoption.
- F. Assure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act, if applicable, by notifying and working with the OCC attorney.

The Adoption Specialist will:

- A. Prepare the child's adoption packet (adoption summary and attachments—see Appendix 2) within 30 days from the permanency planning hearing.
- B. Send a copy of the adoption summary to the Family Service Worker.
- C. Provide the following forms to the foster parent, provisional foster parent, or relative immediately after the staffing that is conducted within ten working days from the hearing that terminates parental rights (if the staffing supports the adoption):
 - 1) CFS-409: Foster/Adoptive Family Preference Checklist
 - 2) ~~CFS-404: General Medical Report for each member of the household~~
 - 3) CFS-363: Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Applicant Smoking Certification
 - 4) CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check and an FBI fingerprint-based criminal record check for each member of the household 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care.
 - 5) CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check for each member of the household 10 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, but including any other state of residence in the last six years and any other state where they work or have worked in the last six years
 - 6) ~~APS-0001: Authorization for Adult Maltreatment Central Registry for each household member age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care.~~
 - 7) CFS-455: Request/Consent for Health Department Services, if applicable. This form should only be utilized if the family uses a well to access drinking water, a septic system, or if the Resource Worker has other concerns related to the drinking water, sanitation, or general health/safety conditions of the home and/or its surroundings that require an inspection by the Health Department.
 - 8) CFS-480: Alternate Compliance of Water Supply Agreement, if applicable. If the family will use bottled water (and purified water for bathing if infants or children under the age of 5 will be placed in the home), this must be noted on the CFS-480, signed by the foster parents, and updated annually.

Neither a policy waiver nor an alternative compliance is required to accompany CFS-480 if the agreement to use bottled water is noted on this form and signed by the foster parents.

~~6) (if applicable; please note that an Alternative Compliance must be requested with this form; see Appendix 9: Alternative Compliance and Policy Waiver Protocol)~~

~~7)9)~~ CFS-425: Application for Adoption Subsidy, if applicable

~~8)10)~~ CFS-426: Statement of Income and Resources for Adoption Subsidy, if applicable

- D. Document the review and assessment of the home on the CFS-446: In-Home Consultation Visit Report.
- E. Complete the assessment and preparation process with the foster parent, provisional foster parent, or relative.
- F. Send the adoption home study, recommendations, completed forms, reference letters, child's adoption packet and CFS-414: Change of Status to the Adoption Supervisor within four months of the court hearing that terminates parental rights.
- G. Make at least two visits in person with the prospective adoptive family with at least one visit being in the home. Have a separate, face-to-face interview with each prospective adoptive parent. Interview each household member in person who is 10 years of age or older.
- H. Refer a relative who has not been approved as a foster parent or provisional foster parent to pre-service training. Complete the assessment and preparation process with this relative and send the adoption home study, recommendation, completed forms, reference letters, child's adoption packet, and CFS-414 to the Adoption Supervisor within four to six months of the court hearing that terminates parental rights. (There may be extenuating circumstance which could lengthen the time frame, such as availability of pre-service training.)
- I. In CHRIS, complete the Affidavit of Disclosure screen on the child in the child's protective service case. If Foster Parent Adoption, be sure to check the Foster Parents Adoption checkbox.
- J. Prepare and present to the foster parent, provisional foster parent, or relative, one non-identifying copy of the child's adoption packet and a complete CFS-471: Disclosure for Adoption during the assessment and preparation process.
- K. Review and discuss the adoption packet with the foster parent, provisional foster parent, or relative.
- L. Secure signatures on the CFS-471: Disclosure for Adoption and ensure a copy is provided.
- M. Assist in preparing the child for adoption and prepare the foster parent, provisional foster parent, or relative for adoption.
- N. Notify the foster parent, provisional foster parent or relative in writing if the adoption home study cannot be completed within 60 days of the final home visit and explain the reason.
- O. Send a copy of this notification to the Adoption Supervisor and Family Service Worker.
- P. Discuss any delays in completing the assessment and preparation process with the Adoption Supervisor and document reasons.
- Q. Complete the packet to determine eligibility for adoption subsidy, if applicable, during the adoption assessment and preparation process and forward to the Adoption Subsidy Coordinator, Adoption Services Unit.

POLICY VIII-H: DEVELOPMENT OF ADOPTIVE HOMES

074/2011

The Division provides adoption services to recruit, assess, prepare, and retain adoptive families to ensure that adoption, when that is the best permanency option, is timely, well-supported, and lifelong. The services focus on finding families for children rather than finding children for families. Assessment and preparation of prospective adoptive families are completed according to the need for homes for children. The child's health, safety, and well-being shall be of paramount concern in the development of the adoptive placement.

When appropriate, the child's relatives may be pursued as possible adoptive placements even after TPR. Siblings shall be placed together in the same adoptive home. Siblings may be placed separately upon written documentation by a Mental Health Professional that placement of the siblings together would be detrimental to their best interests or is otherwise not possible at the time of placement.

DCFS employees who are related to children in foster care may be approved to adopt their relatives, if they are an appropriate placement. Other DCFS employees may apply to be adoptive parents. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In order to ensure quality adoptive homes, DCFS will complete a thorough home assessment for each prospective adoptive family. The home assessment is a mutual selection process that involves several components including, but not limited to, background checks, compliance checks, an in-home consultation visit, pre-service training, a home study, and ongoing consultation between the prospective adoptive parents and Adoption Specialist. Prospective adoptive families are strongly encouraged to attend a local information meeting before the in-home consultation visit but are not required to do so. The purpose of the assessment process is to educate prospective adoptive parents on the characteristics of children waiting for adoptive homes and evaluate the applicants' ability to meet those needs as well as evaluate their compliance with Minimum Licensing Standards and DCFS policy requirements for adoptive homes.

If at any point throughout the home assessment process a prospective adoptive home is found to be out of compliance with a licensing standard or a DCFS policy, this non-compliance issue must be addressed. However, if the Adoption Specialist, or the individual conducting the home study, determines that the non-compliance issue would not endanger the safety or well-being of children placed in the home, an Alternative Compliance or DCFS Policy Waiver may be requested as appropriate. (An alternative compliance is a request for approval from the Child Welfare Agency Review Board to deviate from a minimum licensing standard, while a policy waiver is a request to deviate from a DCFS policy or procedure.) For more information on requesting an Alternative Compliance or DCFS Policy Waiver, see Appendix 9.

If there is a pending child maltreatment report on the family, the Adoption Specialist will stop proceedings until a determination is made. The investigation is to be reviewed and discussed with the Adoption Supervisor.

Criteria for consideration in determining the appropriateness of adoptive homes include, but are not limited to the following:

Jurisdiction - DCFS will participate in the adoption of a minor who is in DHS custody or for whom the Court has retained jurisdiction only if either the person seeking to adopt the child, or the child, is currently a resident of Arkansas.

Residency Requirements for Adoption in Arkansas - The family planning to adopt may live in Arkansas or reside out-of-state and have an approved adoption home study from a licensed adoption agency in their state. The family's home study must be on file in the Adoption Services Unit.

Residency to determine jurisdiction over an adoption may be established in accordance with one of the three following sets of criteria:

- A. A child under the age of six months is a resident of Arkansas if:
 - 1) The child's biological mother resided in Arkansas for more than four months prior to the child's birth, and
 - 2) The child was born in Arkansas or in any city which adjoins the state line or is separated only by a navigable river from an Arkansas city which adjoins the state line, and
 - 3) The child remains in this state until the interlocutory decree has been entered. Or in the case of a nonresident adoptive family, upon receipt of ICPC approval, the child and the prospective adoptive parents may go back to their state of residence and subsequently may return to Arkansas for a hearing on the petition for adoption.
- B. A child over the age of six months is a resident of Arkansas if that child:
 - 1) Has resided in this state for at least six months, and
 - 2) Currently resides in Arkansas, and
 - 3) Is present in this state when the petition for adoption is filed and heard by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- C. A person seeking to adopt is a resident of Arkansas if that person:
 - 1) Occupies a dwelling within the state, and
 - 2) Has a present intent to remain within the state for a period of time, and
 - 3) Manifests the genuineness of that intent through an ongoing physical presence within the state together with indications that the person's presence is not merely transitory in nature.

Age - Applicant is:

- A. At least 21-years-old.
- B. A primary caregiver who is at an age so that it can be anticipated that he or she can parent the child into adulthood. This assessment will be made by the Adoption Specialist when determining what is in the best interests of the child(ren) to be adopted.
- C. Generally, at least a 10-year age difference and no more than a 45-year age difference between the child and adoptive applicant is preferred.

Marital Status

- A. In a two-parent home, the husband and wife shall be joint applicants; each shall actively participate in the approval process, and shall provide verification that they are married. The marriage shall be stable.
- B. A person who is divorced must provide verification of that divorce and must be divorced for at least one year from the date on the court order (i.e., only verification of the most recent divorce is required).
- C. A person who is widowed must provide verification that he or she has been widowed for at least one year.
- D. Couples who are separated (i.e. final divorce decree has not been issued) may not apply to adopt.
- E. A single person may apply to adopt.

A minor may not be adopted or placed in a foster home if the individual seeking to adopt or to serve as a foster parent is cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state; additionally, there may not be any other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state. The prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite-sex and same-sex individuals.

DCFS shall not place or permit a child in foster care to remain in any home where there are roomers or boarders, which includes foreign exchange students. Family members are not considered roomers or boarders. An assessment must be conducted on each family member's impact on the child and the child's impact on each family member.

General Physical and Mental Health - Members of the household must not have a health condition or disability that would interfere with the family's ability to parent the child. Each member of the household shall have a

physical examination by a physician within six months prior to the approval of the adoption home study on the prospective adoptive family, and annually thereafter until placement of a child.

Housing

- A. Space must be adequate to promote health and safety. Each bedroom should have at least 50 square feet of space per occupant.
- B. All firearms must be maintained in a secure, locked location separate from ammunition.
- C. All water hazards and dangerous pets will be assessed. Safeguard measures will be implemented, as appropriate.
- D. Children of opposite sexes must have their own separate bedrooms if either child is four years old or older, except for a mother in foster care with her child(ren).
- E. Water must be provided by public water system or approved annually by the Department of Health (this includes septic systems). If a family's water source does not pass the Department of Health's inspection, bottled water may be used for drinking (purified water must also be used for bathing if infants and/or children under the age of 5 will be placed in the home) provided that the agreement to use bottled water is documented in the family's file. -

Resources - The applicant must have sufficient resources to meet the financial, medical, physical, educational, emotional, and shelter needs of the child without depending solely on state or federal financial assistance (e.g., SNAP, SSI, SSA, etc) to meet those needs (although such forms of assistance may be used to supplement a family's income). A recent check stub and the previous year's income tax return are required to verify income and employment. While an adoption subsidy may be a resource for a child who meets the eligibility criteria, adoptive parents should have sufficient resources to care for a child even without a subsidy. The adoption subsidy shall not be considered a part of the foster family's income.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

In addition to ensuring that homes meet the basic criteria, the Division shall only place children in approved adoptive homes where the adoptive parents and appropriate members of the household have been cleared through a series of background checks: the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, the Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry, the Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check and an FBI Criminal Background Check. A household member is defined as any person who stays in a foster home for more than three cumulative months in a calendar year (e.g., an adult biological child of the foster parents who is home for the summer and holiday breaks or a relative who visits for six weeks twice a year).

Child Maltreatment Central Registry - Adoptive parents and all other members of the household age 10 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry. The Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree is issued. If applicable, a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check shall also be conducted on each household member age 10 years or older in any state of residence in which they have lived for the past six years, and in their state of employment, if different, for reports of child maltreatment.

Adult Maltreatment Central Registry – Adoptive parents and all other members of the household age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through the Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry. The Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Central Registry check shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree is issued.

State Police Criminal Record Check – Adoptive parents and all other members of the household age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through a State Police Criminal Record Check. The State Police Criminal Record Check shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree is issued.

FBI Criminal Background Check - Adoptive parents and all members of the foster home who are 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, must also clear an FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check. The FBI Check does not need to be repeated.

Vehicle Safety Check - DCFS will check the driving record (violation points) for each prospective adoptive parent and other applicable members of the household. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points a foster parent may be allowed.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Adoptive parents must also complete the Division's pre-service training curriculum which includes 27 hours of Foster/Adopt PRIDE training and three hours of DCFS orientation prior to placement of a child in their home. Central Registry and State Police Criminal Background checks must be cleared and the FBI Criminal Background Check must have been submitted before a prospective adoptive parent can begin pre-service training. Adoptive parents must also complete CPR and Standard First Aid Training and receive certification in both areas prior to placement of a child in their home.

Before placement for adoption, the Adoption Specialist shall compile and provide a disclosure packet to the prospective adoptive parents, which is a detailed, written health history and genetic and social history of the child which excludes information which would identify custodial/non-custodial parent(s) or members of a custodial/non-custodial parent(s)'s family. The information shall be set forth in a document that is separate from any document containing information identifying the custodial/non-custodial parent(s) or members of the custodial/non-custodial parent(s)'s family.

The detailed, written health history and genetic and social history shall be identified as such, and shall be filed with the clerk before the entry of the adoption decree. Upon order of the court for good cause shown, the clerk of the circuit court may tender to a person identified by the court a copy of the detailed, written health history and genetic and social history.

The Division provides pre-placement services to move children into adoptive families in a timely manner and post-placement services to help the family adjust. After finalization, services are available to help preserve adoptive families such as respite care, counseling, wraparound services, Intensive Family Services, and the Mutual Consent Voluntary Adoption Registry.

The placement of a child for adoption will not be denied or delayed when an approved family is available outside the jurisdiction responsible for handling the child's case.

The Juvenile Division of Circuit Court shall retain jurisdiction to issue orders of adoption, interlocutory or final, when a juvenile is placed outside the state of Arkansas, unless the Court allows for finalization in the receiving state.

Legal risk adoptive placements may be considered for a newborn that is being relinquished for adoption or for a child whose custodial/non-custodial parent(s) has filed an appeal to the termination of parental rights. Legal risk placements can only be approved by the Adoptions Manager.

The Division shall provide notice of any hearing to be held with respect to a child in Department custody to the child's foster or pre-adoptive parents. (Families are identified as pre-adoptive once a child is placed in the home and prior to finalization of the adoption.) The original petitioner in the juvenile matter shall provide relative caregivers notice of any hearing. The court shall give foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers the right to be heard in any hearing held with respect to a child in foster care. Foster parents, adoptive parents, and relative caregivers shall not be made a party to a case solely on the basis that they are entitled to notice and the right to be heard.

FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY, SOME NONAFFECTED PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

PROCEDURE VIII-H5: Background Check Processing

07/2011

If the prospective adoptive family did not attend an Informational Meeting, the Adoption Specialist must provide the family with a Background Check Packet which includes:

- 1) FBI fingerprint card
- 2) CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check
- 3) APS-0001: Authorization for Adult Maltreatment Central Registry
- 4) CFS-341: Certification of Absence of Criminal Record
- 5) CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check
- 6) CFS-419: Foster Family Support System Information
- 7) CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Additional Requirements for DCFS Drivers
- 8) VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
- 9) VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
- 10) Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Manual

The Adoption Specialist will:

- A. Submit the signed CFS-593, VSP-1 and VSP-2 to the Vehicle Safety Program Coordinator along with a clear copy of the driver's license for each prospective adoptive parent, FFSS member, and applicable teenage driver.
 - 1) Copy the front and back of the driver's license.
 - 2) Document in CHRIS.
 - 3) The county office must receive the results of the Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program check before the family can be approved for training.
- B. Submit the completed CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check for each household member and FFSS member age 10 years and older, excluding children in foster care. The CFS-316 must be notarized. The Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued. The person must have no history of true abuse and/or neglect.
 - 1) If applicable, a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check should also be conducted on each household member and FFSS member age 10 years and older in any state of residence in which they have lived for the past six years, and in their state of employment, if different, for reports of child maltreatment.
 - 2) Route each completed CFS-316 to the Central Registry Unit.
 - 3) Document on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen.
 - 4) File a copy of the results in the adoptive family file. The county office must receive the results of the Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check before the family can be approved for training.
- C. Submit the completed APS-0001: Authorization for Adult Maltreatment Central Registry for each household member age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care. The APS-0001 must be notarized. The Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued. The person must have no history of true abuse and/or neglect.
 - 1) Route each completed APS-0001 to Adult Protective Services.
 - 2) File a copy of the results in the adoptive family file. The county office must receive the results of the Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check before the family can be approved for training.
- D. Use CFS-341: Certification of Absence of Criminal Record to obtain written certification from the prospective adoptive parent(s) that any household members aged 10-17 do not have a criminal record. File a copy in the adoptive family file.
- E. Submit the completed CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check for each household member and FFSS member age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care. The CFS-342 must be notarized. The State Police Criminal Record Check must be completed prior to requesting the FBI Criminal Background Check. Applicants must have no history of convictions for offenses listed in ACA § 9-28-409. (See POLICY

VIII-G or APPENDIX 9 for more information.) These checks must be made prior to approval and shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued.

- 1) Route each completed CFS-342 to the Criminal Records Unit.
 - 2) Document on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen.
 - 3) File a copy of the results in the adoptive family file. The county office must receive the results of the Criminal Record Check before the family can be approved for training.
- F. Out-of-state adoptive families do not need to do an Arkansas State Police Check if they have never resided in Arkansas. Adoptive parents and each household member age 18 years and older, excluding children in foster care, residing out-of-state shall provide state police criminal record checks from their state of residence. These checks must be made prior to approval and shall be repeated annually thereafter until the adoption decree has been issued.
- G. Process an FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check for each household member age 18 years of age and older, excluding children in foster care. Encourage the adoptive applicants to submit the FBI Criminal Background Check as early as possible given that processing time may be significant. The FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check must be submitted prior to the family attending training; however, the results are not required before the family can attend training. There are two options for completing the FBI check:
- 1) Electronic Fingerprint Scanning
 - a. Adoptive applicants do NOT need to fill out an FBI fingerprint card. A request for electronic scanning will be done via CFS-342.
 - b. The Adoption Specialist will forward the completed CFS-342 to the Criminal Records Unit.
 - c. The Criminal Records Unit will use the CFS-342 to get a transaction number from the State Police.
 - d. The Criminal Records Unit will forward the transaction number to the Adoption Specialist.
 - e. The Adoption Specialist will forward the transaction number to the applicants.
 - f. Applicants must go to an approved Electronic Harvester to have fingerprints scanned. Check with the Adoption Specialist for the closest location.
 - ~~g.~~ Applicants must pay the electronic harvester fee. If applicants are approved and opened as a foster/pre-adoptive home, they may request reimbursement. A receipt for the harvester fees and a DHS-1914 must be submitted to the Resource Worker's local financial coordinator for reimbursement processing.
 - ~~h.~~g. The Adoption Specialist will document the results on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen and file a copy of the results in the adoptive family file.
 - 2) Ink Fingerprint
 - a. Adoptive applicants will complete CFS-342 and the FBI fingerprint card with good, unsmudged prints. Take care not to staple through the fingerprints on the FBI fingerprint card.
 - i. If the prints are not readable, the family will have to re-submit. Adoptive applicants may not use an Electronic Harvester if they have already submitted ink fingerprints and the attempt was unsuccessful.
 - ii. If a legible set of fingerprints cannot be obtained after a minimum of two attempts, a name-based FBI check will be conducted instead.
 - b. The Adoption Specialist will forward the documents to the Criminal Records Unit.
 - c. The Adoption Specialist will document the results on the Provider Household Member Required Checks Information Screen and file a copy of the results in the adoptive family file.

PROCEDURE VIII-H6: In-Home Consultation Visit

07/2011

All adoptive applicants must participate in an In-Home Consultation Visit in order to begin the assessment process. While prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to attend an information meeting before the In-Home Consultation Visit, they are not required to do so.

The Adoption Specialist will:

- A. Within 5 working days after clearances on all required background checks have been received (FBI checks must have been submitted but not necessarily completed.), contact the prospective adoptive family to schedule an in-home consultation visit with them. The in-home consultation visit should take place within two weeks of the scheduling call.
- B. During the In-Home Consultation Visit:
- 1) Provide all Information Meeting documents (aside from the Background Check Packet which should have already been completed) to the family if they have not yet attended the Information Meeting (see PROCEDURE VIII-H4). Families are encouraged to attend Information Meetings but are not required to do so.
 - 2) Review and complete the CFS-446: In-Home Consultation Visit Report. The completed CFS-446 will serve as the first formal step in the application process.
 - 3) Discuss the standards of approval for adoptive homes as outlined in PUB-22 and answer any questions the family may have.
 - 4) Inform the prospective adoptive family that they will not be approved until they meet minimum licensing standards, DCFS policy requirements, and any other qualifications deemed appropriate.
 - 5) Discuss training requirements required prior to approval, including completion of CPR and Standard (not Basic) First Aid training and certification.
 - 6) Ask the adoptive applicant to complete a photograph album.
 - 7) Review the Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program (ASVSP) with the family and have them complete the following forms, if they have not already done so:
 - a. CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program Additional Requirements for DCFS Drivers.
Teenage drivers in the home will be subjected to the ASVSP and must be licensed if they will be allowed to transport children in foster care who are placed in the home. The result of the teenager's ASVSP report should not impact the decision to approve the home as long as the parents' ASVSP check is favorable. If teenager does not pass the ASVSP report, he or she will not be able to transport children during the pre-adoptive placement.
 - b. VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
 - c. VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
 - 8) If the Background Check Packet for the members of the Foster Family Support System (needed for pre-adoptive placements) has not been completed and processed, collect and begin processing the CFS-419: Foster Family Support System Information (one for each FFSS family) and for each appropriate member of each FFSS family (following Procedure VIII-H5: Background Check Processing):
 - a. CFS-316: Request for Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check
 - b. CFS-342: State Police Criminal Record Check
 - c. CFS-593: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program (ASVSP)
 - d. VSP-1: Authorization to Operate State Vehicles and Private Vehicles on State Business
 - e. VSP-2: Authorization to Obtain Traffic Violation Record
 - 9) Provide the family with the following documents for them to complete and review as necessary:
 - a. CFS-363: Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Applicant Smoking Certification
 - a. ~~CFS-404: General Medical Report (one for each person residing in the household)~~
 - b. ~~CFS-409: Foster/Adoptive Family Preference Checklist~~
 - c. ~~CFS-455: Request/Consent for Health Department Services, if applicable. This form should only be utilized if the family uses a well to access drinking water, a septic system, or if the Adoption Specialist has other concerns related to the drinking water, sanitation, or general health/safety conditions of the home and/or its surroundings that requires an inspection by the Health Department.~~
 - 10) CFS-480: Alternate Compliance of Water Supply Agreement. If the family will use bottled water (and purified water for bathing if infants or children under the age of 5 will be placed in the home), this must be noted on the CFS-480, signed by the foster parents, and updated annually. Neither a policy waiver nor an alternative compliance is required to accompany CFS-480 if the agreement to use bottled water is noted on this form and signed by the foster parents.

- ~~a-e.~~ SAFE Questionnaire I
- ~~11-10)~~ Inform the family that three positive confidential reference letters are required.
- a. Provide the family with three SAFE Reference Letter Templates
- ~~a. Provide the family with three copies of CFS-421: Reference Letter.~~
- b. Provide the family with three stamped envelopes addressed to their area MidSOUTH Training Academy (c/o Foster Parent Program) or their contract provider agency as appropriate.
- c. Inform the family that the individual writing the reference letter must mail it directly to the agency listed on the stamped addressed envelope provided. The prospective adoptive family shall not view the reference letter.
- ~~12-11)~~ Determine whether the family would be willing to serve as an informal respite home (see POLICY VII-G: Alternate Care).
- ~~13-12)~~ Begin completing the CFS-475: Checklist for Compliance.
- C. Require a professional assessment of an applicant's ability to parent, if needed. It may be necessary for the adoptive applicant to pay for the assessment.

PROCEDURE VIII-H8: Pre-Service Training

07/2011

The prospective adoptive family will:

- A. Complete a minimum of 27 hours of Foster/Adopt PRIDE training and three hours of DCFS orientation prior to placement of a child. All make-up sessions shall also be completed in order for a family to fully complete pre-service training.
- B. Complete CPR and First Aid Training and receive certification in both areas.
- C. Submit the completed SAFE Questionnaire I to their Pre-Service Trainer on the first day of training.
- ~~C-D.~~ Submit the completed CFS-409: Foster/Adoptive Family Preference Checklist to the Adoption Specialist by the first day of Pre-Service Training;
- ~~D-E.~~ Submit the following forms to the Adoption Specialist (not to the Pre-Service Trainer) before completing Pre-Service Training:
- 1) CFS-363: Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Applicant Smoking Certification
- ~~1) CFS-404: General Medical Report (one for each member residing in the household)~~
- 2)
- ~~2) CFS-409: Foster/Adoptive Family Preference Checklist~~
- 3)
- ~~3) CFS-455: Request/Consent for Health Department Services, if applicable. This form should only be utilized if the family uses a well to access drinking water, a septic system, or if the Adoption Specialist has other concerns related to the drinking water, sanitation, or general health/safety conditions of the home and/or its surroundings that requires an inspection by the Health Department.~~
- 4)
- 5) CFS-480: Alternate Compliance of Water Supply Agreement, (if applicable)
- ~~4) ; please note that an Alternative Compliance must be requested with this form; see Appendix 9: Alternative Compliance and Policy Waiver Protocol).~~
- ~~E-F.~~ Ensure that the individuals providing references have mailed them to the appropriate MidSOUTH Training Academy (c/o Foster Parent Program) or the contract provider agency listed on the pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelope before completing Pre-Service Training. (i.e., all reference letters shall remain confidential; prospective adoptive family shall not handle a completed reference letter).

The Adoption Specialist will:

- A. Attend the last training module and as many other training modules as possible.
- B. Assist with the Area or County Orientation Session.
- C. Document the CPR Training and First Aid Training Effective and Expiration Dates in the Provider Household Members/Requirements Tab in CHRIS.

- D. Enter the CFS-409 responses in the Provider Adoption Characteristics Tab in CHRIS. If a family determines they would like to make revisions to CFS-409 during the pre-service training period, they may submit a revised CFS-409 to the Adoption Specialist who will enter the requested changes into CHRIS.
- E. File the completed CFS-404, CFS-409, CFS-455 (if applicable), CFS-480 (if applicable) in the adoptive family file.

PROCEDURE VIII-H9: Home Study

07/2011

A home study is one component of the overall home assessment process. A home study determines if a family is ready, willing, and able to become a suitable and safe placement resource for a child. At least two home study visits must be conducted in person with the foster parent applicants, including at least one visit to the home. The evaluator shall interview every age-appropriate members of the household.

The home study must evaluate a family's dynamics including but not limited to, motivation for wanting to adopt, extended family's acceptance of adoptive child, household composition, housing, safety hazards, income and expenses, health, education, child care arrangements or plans, child rearing practices, daily schedules, social history, family activities, and support systems, (for more information see PUB-04: Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies). By learning more about these areas, the home study assists in ascertaining how members of a family function individually and as a unit, and, subsequently, helps inform the conclusions and recommendation as to whether a family should serve as an adoptive home.

To complete a successful home study, the Division uses the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) to evaluate the home from a qualitative standpoint. SAFE involves a series of interviews guided by questionnaires which are then evaluated through the use of the SAFE Psychosocial Inventory, and, finally, summarized in the SAFE Home Study Report. The use of these tools ensures a common evaluation process and promotes uniformity in home studies across the state.

~~———— CFS 405: Foster Care/Adoption Services Family Assessment Information. The home study can be conducted by designated Division staff, by staff contracted through the MidSOUTH Training Academy or other contract providers, or by volunteers trained by designated DCFS staff.~~

The home study can be conducted by designated Division staff, by staff contracted through the MidSOUTH Training Academy or other contract providers, or by volunteers trained by designated DCFS staff. The evaluator will complete the home study in accordance with established SAFE protocols.

The individual conducting the home study will:

- A. Conduct an initial face-to-face interview with the prospective adoptive parent(s) using the applicants' responses to SAFE Questionnaire I (to have been completed and submitted by the prospective adoptive parents by the first day of pre-service training) to guide the conversation.
- ~~A. Conduct an initial face-to-face interview with the prospective adoptive parent(s) using CFS 405 to guide the conversation.~~
- B. Evaluate the first interview and note responses that will require further clarification and/or development.
- C. Conduct a second face-to-face interview with the applicant(s).
- D. During the second interview, provide SAFE Questionnaire II to the prospective adoptive parents who will complete this questionnaire in the presence of the home study evaluator. If a married couple is being interviewed, the spouses should complete and discuss their responses to the SAFE Questionnaire II with the home study evaluator separately.
- ~~D.E.~~ Evaluate the second interview and note responses that will require further clarification and/or development.
- ~~E.F.~~ If necessary, conduct additional face-to-face interviews with the prospective adoptive parent(s) and/or other members of the household to further explore topics noted during the evaluation process.

~~F.~~ Interview each household member separately who is 10 years of age or older. Observe younger children and interview if appropriate.

~~G.~~

~~H.~~ Using the information collected during interviews and the SAFE Reference Letters, along with the Desk Guide, complete the SAFE Psychosocial Inventory.

~~I.~~ Within 45 working days of the family completing pre-service training, complete the final SAFE Home Study Report and submit to the Adoption Specialist for review and assessment.

~~G.~~ Within 45 working days of the family completing pre-service training, complete the home study report (based on CFS 405) and submit to the Adoption Specialist for review and assessment.

The Adoption Specialist will:

- A. Review the final **SAFE** home study report (~~based on CFS 405~~) and other assessment documents.
- B. Based on the review, submit the recommendation to approve or deny the home to the Adoptions Supervisor within seven working days of receiving the final **SAFE** home study report.
- C. Send a copy of the **SAFE** home study report, written recommendation of approval or denial, all required forms including the three *positive, confidential* reference letters to the Adoptions Supervisor.
- D. If the home is denied, explain the reasons for denial in a personal interview and refer for professional services if indicated.

~~E.~~ Provide a copy of the final SAFE Home Study Report to the family regardless of approval or denial.

~~E-F.~~ Keep the family's photo album in his or her possession.

~~F-G.~~ Document the Initial Home Study Completed Date on the Provider Services Details Screen in CHRIS.

The Adoption Supervisor will:

- A. Review and assess the completed **SAFE** home study report and other assessment documents as well as the Adoption Specialist's recommendation to approve or deny the home.
- B. Within seven working days of receiving all final documents from the Adoption Specialist, determine whether to approve or deny the adoptive applicant.
- C. Notify the applicant in writing if a determination to approve or deny the home based on the **final SAFE** home study report and other assessment documents cannot be completed within 60 working days of the family completing pre-service training and explain the reason. Send a copy to the Adoption Specialist.
- D. In CHRIS, upon approval of the adoptive applicant, enter the new adoptive family in CHRIS by completing the Resource screens to obtain a resource provider number. Also, the Vendor Maintenance Form - F10021 must be completed and sent to AASIS as soon as possible by designated staff.
- E. Return the **SAFE** home study report and entire record to the Adoption Specialist with a copy of the written approval or denial notification.

PROCEDURE VIII-H11: Reevaluation of Approved Adoptive Applicant's Record

07/2011

A child in foster care placed in an approved adoptive home (Pre-Adoptive Service) continues status as a child in foster care until finalization of the adoption. The adoptive home (Pre-Adoptive Home Service) must be reevaluated annually until the adoption is finalized. Additionally, the adoptive home must be reevaluated if the approved applicant(s) experiences any major life changes such as:

- Death or serious illness among the members of the adoptive family.
- Marriage, separation, or divorce.
- Loss of or change in employment.
- Change in residence.
- Suspected child maltreatment of any child in the adoptive home.
- The addition of family members (e.g. birth, adoption, aging relative moving in).

The Adoption Specialist will reevaluate the family prior to placement of the child. The Adoption Specialist will not wait for the annual reevaluation. An additional visual inspection of the home is required if there has been a change of residence. Completion of new forms (listed below) will be necessary depending on the type of change.

If an approved applicant has not had a child placed within one year, or a child has been placed and the adoption has not been finalized, or the adoptive family has experienced a major life change, the Adoption Specialist will:

- A. Visit the home and ascertain changes in the situation and assess the family's continued interest in adoption.
- B. Use the ~~CFS-405 and~~ CFS-475: Checklist for Compliance and SAFE reevaluation tools to update the narrative summary and record annually from the date in the approval letter until a child is placed and the adoption is finalized.
- C. Complete/update the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) with the parent.
- D. Submit the completed ITNA to MidSOUTH within 45 working days of the home visit.
- E. Submit within 45 working days from the home visit a packet to the Adoption Supervisor to include:
 - 1) SAFE reevaluation
 - 2) CFS-475
 - 3) Any background checks that require updating at that time (CFS-316 and/or CFS-342)
 - 4) CFS-404: General Medical Form Report on each member of the household;
 - 5) CFS-414: Change of Status, if applicable.
- F. Send a copy of the SAFE reevaluation, CFS-475, all required forms, and written notification of approval to the Adoptions Manager or designee when a reevaluation is approved.
- G. In CHRIS, under the Pre-Adoptive Home Service for the approved adoptive family:
 - 1) Complete the Provider Reevaluation Screen and Request Approval for Adoption Supervisor's review and approval.
 - 2) Complete the Provider Contact Screen on all activities concerning reevaluation process.
 - 3) Update the Provider Resource Household Members Required Checks Tab paying particular attention to the Criminal Record Checks and the Child Maltreatment Central Registry Checks.
 - 4) Update any expired CPR Training and First Aid Training dates.

The Adoption Supervisor will:

- A. Refer to PROCEDURE VIII-H5: Background Check Processing.
- B. In CHRIS, under the Pre-Adoptive Homes Service for the approved adoptive family:
 - 1) Review the Provider Reevaluation Screen and approve the Adoption Specialist's Request for Approval (if appropriate) of adoptive family's reevaluation.

**Arkansas Department of Human Services
Division of Children and Family Services
REQUEST FOR CHILD MALTREATMENT CENTRAL REGISTRY CHECK**

THIS FORM WILL NOT BE PROCESSED UNTIL ALL INFORMATION IS COMPLETED.

TYPE OF APPLICANT: ☐ DHS Employee/Applicant [Division:- _____] ☐ Foster Parent ☐ Legal Custodian
☐ Adoptive Parent ☐ Provisional Foster Parent

☐ Foster Family Support System (FFSS) for: _____

*_____
Name of Foster Family whom FFSS will support*

☐ Other (This request will be processed for a fee of \$10 made payable by check or money order to DHS. We do not accept cash. This fee may be waived for non-profits who provide proof of 501(c)(3) status. Allow 7-10 business days for processing.)

This information should be addressed to:

Name/Title (print)

Organization Requesting the Report

Address (physical)

Telephone #

Fax #

Address (provide mailing, if different than physical)

Name of Applicant: _____

Maiden Name/Other Names Used: _____

Race: _____ **Sex:** _____ **Age/DOB:** _____ / _____ **SSN:** _____

Present Address: (since _____, _____) _____

Previous Addresses (from the last six years):

1) _____

2) _____

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

3) _____

4) _____

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

Cities and States of Employment (outside of Arkansas) for last six years:

1) _____

2) _____

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

3) _____

4) _____

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

Children (related or non-related) now residing or who have resided in the home at any time and all biological children, even if they have not resided in the home:

Full Name: _____

DOB/Age: _____ / _____

Relationship: _____

SS# (if known): _____

Full Name: _____

DOB/Age: _____ / _____

Relationship: _____

SS# (if known): _____

Full Name: _____

DOB/Age: _____ / _____

Relationship: _____

SS# (if known): _____

Full Name: _____

DOB/Age: _____ / _____

Relationship: _____

SS# (if known): _____

THE FOLLOWING IS TO BE COMPLETED **ONLY** WITH A NOTARY

I, _____ verify that the information above is true and complete. I authorize the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry to release any information their files may contain concerning me as an offender of a true report of child maltreatment.

Signature of Applicant _____

Date _____

County of _____ State of Arkansas

Acknowledged before me, this _____ day of _____, _____

Notary Public _____

My commission expires: _____

THE FOLLOWING IS TO BE COMPLETED BY CENTRAL REGISTRY

☐ The Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry contains no record under the referenced name in a true report of child maltreatment.

Examiner's Initials and Date _____

Please note that whenever there is a determination of child maltreatment, the person identified as the offender has the right to a hearing to contest that determination. The person's name may not be placed in the Central Registry until after the hearing decision. Therefore, the absence of a true report in the Child Maltreatment Central Registry does not imply that the person is or is not the subject of a completed child maltreatment investigation. Please check the Central Registry periodically as names can be added to the Central Registry based on new maltreatment reports and upon final administrative determination.

☐ Information Found

Examiner's Signature and Date _____

**Arkansas Department of Human Services
Division of Children and Family Services
STATE POLICE CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK**

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY DCFS WORKER

Check all that apply: ☐ ~~Provisional Foster Home Study~~ ☐ ~~Regular Foster Parent Home Study~~ ☐ ~~Adoptive Parentive Home Study~~ ☐ ~~FFSS (~~ ☐ ~~Other~~ ☐ ~~The CALL~~ ☐
~~Other~~ ☐ ~~Provisional~~ ☐ ~~ICPC~~ ☐ ~~COURT ORDERED?~~ -YES ☐ -NO ☐ ~~State Only~~ ☐ ~~State/FBI~~ ☐

***ONLY Provisional ~~Foster Home~~, ICPC Reg No. 7, and Court Ordered Checks will be expedited.**

County Requesting Check and County Number

Name of DCFS Worker Requesting the Check

()
Telephone Number and Extension Number

Date of Request

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PERSON TO BE CHECKED (PLEASE PRINT)

LEGAL NAME: _____
Last (Include Jr., II, III) First Middle

MAIDEN NAME: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

CURRENT STREET ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ AGE: _____ RACE: _____ SEX: Male ☐ Female ☐

STATE OF BIRTH: _____ CITIZENSHIP: _____ SOC SEC #: _____

HEIGHT: _____ WEIGHT: _____ EYE COLOR: _____ HAIR COLOR: _____

DRIVER'S LICENSE OR STATE ID NUMBER: _____ ISSUED BY STATE OF: _____

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME? NO ☐ YES ☐ (If yes, please provide a description of the crime and the particulars of the conviction.) _____

THE FOLLOWING IS TO BE COMPLETED ONLY IN THE PRESENCE OF A NOTARY

I hereby authorize the Department of Human Services to obtain a Criminal Record Check through the Arkansas State Police in accordance with Act 1573 of 2005. I provide this consent now for current and future checks as requested by the Department of Human Services. I understand that at any time I may revoke this continuing permission in writing. I state on oath that the representations made herein are true and correct. I understand that I may challenge the accuracy and completeness of any information in any report and obtain a prompt determination as to the validity of the challenge before a final determination is made by the board. I understand that I may be denied a license or exemption to operate a child welfare agency or may be denied unsupervised access to children in the care of a child welfare agency due to information obtained by this check that indicates I have been convicted of, or am under pending indictment for a crime per ACA § 9-28-409. I understand that any background check and the results thereof shall be handled in accordance with the requirements of Pub. L. No. 92-544.

Signature of Applicant/Employee

Date

State of Arkansas, County of _____. Subscribed and sworn to before me a Notary Public in and for the county and state aforesaid, this _____ day of _____, _____.

Notary Public

My Commission Expires on _____, _____.