

## **POLICY VI-P: Private Licensed Placement Agency (PLPA) Resource Homes**

10/2020

A Private Licensed Placement Agency (PLPA) is a child placement agency licensed by the Child Welfare Agency Review Board to recruit, train, approve, and support their own resource homes to provide substitute care within a family-like setting on a twenty-four-hour basis for any child placed in the home by a child placement agency. A PLPA is responsible for maintaining the resource homes it recruits by ensuring those resource homes continuously meet Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies (Placement) and Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) resource home policy and procedures, including but not limited to:

- Completion of background checks
- SAFE home studies (note: resource parents must reside in their residence prior to a SAFE home study being completed on the home)
- Pre-service training
- Continuing resource parent education as applicable
- Adherence to the reasonable and prudent parent standard and use of all types of Alternate Care (see Policy VII-G)
- Requests for changes in placement (see Procedure VII-L1: Resource Parent Request for Placement Change)
- Allegations of child maltreatment involving the resource home (see Policy VII-K: Child Maltreatment Allegations Concerning Out-of-Home Placements).

A PLPA resource home is monitored through quarterly and annual reevaluations by its respective PLPA approval agency. A PLPA resource home is also more intensively supervised and supported by the approving PLPA. In addition to a DCFS Family Service Worker, each child in a PLPA resource home is assigned a case manager who is active in the child's daily life through frequent visits (a minimum of monthly).

Placement in an approved and available PLPA resource home is an option for any child in DHS custody when a PLPA resource home best meets the needs of a particular child. Placement in a PLPA resource home of a child in the custody of DHS is encouraged in the following circumstances:

- A. He or she is a sibling of a child placed in a PLPA home;
- B. He or she is a child of a youth in a PLPA home; or,
- C. He or she had previously been placed in a PLPA resource home and transitioned to other services requiring a more intensive treatment approach (e.g., acute treatment), and the child is now able to return to a resource home setting.

A resource parent must be financially able to care for his or her own needs without the foster care board payment to supplement his or her income. If a resource parent with a current placement elects to no longer be an active resource parent for the PLPA, the PLPA will notify DCFS and work collaboratively with the Division to move any children currently placed in that resource home to another licensed or approved resource home, shelter, or facility, or an exempt child welfare agency as defined at A.C.A. § 9-28-402(12).

PLPA resource homes are expected to accept placement of older children (ages 6-18) and sibling groups. PLPA resource homes with space limitations are expected to seek and accept children over the age of six (6).

If a child(ren) in a PLPA resource home becomes available for adoption and the resource family has expressed interest in adopting the child(ren), a consideration to adopt staffing may occur in accordance with DCFS Policy VIII-G: Adoption Decisions, procedure VIII-G1: Staffing and Recommendations.

**A resource home may not be both a PLPA home through a private licensed agency and a DCFS resource home. If a PLPA home wishes to become a DCFS resource home, the PLPA provider must close their PLPA home and complete an inquiry to become a resource home through DCFS.**

## **PROCEDURE VI-P1: Referrals for PLPA Resource Homes**

If the Family Service Worker (FSW) determines a Private Licensed Placement Agency (PLPA) resource home to be the most appropriate placement for a child, he or she will:

- A. Complete CFS-367: Specialized Placement Referral Form.
- B. Email the completed CFS-367: Specialized Placement Referral Form to the desired PLPA.
- C. Retain a paper copy of the CFS-367: Specialized Placement Referral Form in the child's case file.

If the child is accepted into a PLPA placement, the FSW will:

- A. Forward additional required documents to the provider, as requested.
- B. Continue to maintain the child's case file while he or she is in the PLPA resource home.
- C. Coordinate a monthly visit with the PLPA case manager to assess the health and safety of the child placed in the PLPA resource home.

## **POLICY VII-A: RESOURCE HOME DEFINITIONS AND PURPOSE**

10/2020

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS or Division) is licensed by the Child Welfare Agency Review Board as a child placement agency to approve foster and adoptive homes for DCFS. The Division utilizes the term “resource home” to refer to a home of an individual or family that provides either foster, pre-adoptive, or adoptive services on a 24-hour basis within a family-like setting for children in the custody of and placed there by the DHS. For the time in which a child in DHS custody is placed in a resource home, that resource home must adhere to the reasonable and prudent parent standard (see Policy VII-G: Alternate Care), in the care of any child placed in the home by DHS and be the primary residence of the individual or family that is owned, rented, sublet, or leased by the individual or family.

To receive full approval as a resource home, a resource home must meet all applicable Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies (Placement) established by the Child Welfare Agency Review Board and DCFS policy regarding resource home approval and maintenance provided herein (i.e., Section VII of the DCFS Policy and Procedure Manual). Anything less than full approval as a resource home is insufficient for meeting title IV-E eligibility requirements. A resource home must meet all applicable Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies (Placement) and DCFS policy pertaining to resource home approval and maintenance for the duration of the child’s placement while the child is in DHS custody. With respect to resource homes on or near Indian reservations, approval rests with the tribal licensing or approval authority.

Regardless of the specific service type provided, the term resource home is used because all resource homes are designed to serve as a resource to children in the custody of DHS and, in cases where reunification with the biological family is still the goal, also serve as a resource to the child’s biological family. The development of quality resource homes is a process essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of children in care while concurrently supporting children’s permanency goals. The resource family is part of a team. When these team members cooperate and understand their own and each other’s roles, the quality of the experience for everyone is increased and the well-being of the child and his or her family is positively affected.

There are two types of DCFS resource homes that provide foster care services: provisional relative or fictive kin resource homes -- which may be opened on a provisional basis or as a fully approved resource home -- and traditional resource homes.

Relative or fictive kin resource homes that are opened on a provisional basis are identified, recruited, and opened in an expedited manner by a Family Service Worker. The Division seeks out provisional relative and fictive kin resource homes in an effort to preserve family connections and reduce the amount of trauma a child experiences when entering foster care by placing the child with a safe and appropriate relative or fictive kin with whom the child has a positive relationship. “Relative” means a person within the fifth degree of kinship to the child or to at least one of the children in a sibling group, including step-siblings and half-siblings, by virtue of blood or adoption if one has been identified and is appropriate. “Fictive kin” means a person not related by blood or marriage, but who has a strong, positive, emotional tie to a child and has a positive role in the child’s life, or the life of a parent of the child if the child is an infant, if one has been identified and is appropriate.

To open and place a child in DHS custody in a provisional relative or fictive kin resource home, Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and Vehicle Safety Program Check results must be received for all applicable household members, and a visual inspection of the home must be completed (see Policy VII-C and related procedures for additional details). Therefore, a provisional relative or fictive kin resource home may be opened and a child in DHS custody placed in that home before the results of the FBI Background Check are received, before out-of-state child maltreatment checks are received, before the provisional resource parents have completed the pre-service training, and before a full home study is completed. Once opened as a provisional home, DCFS staff works with the relative or fictive kin resource parents in that home to bring them into full compliance with all Minimum Licensing Standards and DCFS policies in order to transition

from provisional resource home status to a fully approved relative or fictive kin resource home within a six (6) month period. However, through the approved alternative compliance or policy waiver processes, as applicable (see Appendix 8: Alternative Compliance and Policy Waiver Protocol), non-safety standards and policies may be waived for relative and fictive kin resource homes (and the home will still be considered to be in full compliance with any alternative compliance or policy waiver that is in place for that specific home). Provisional resource homes that are not in full compliance at the end of six (6) months must be closed and the child(ren) removed, unless the relative has acquired custody.

During the period of time that a relative or fictive kin home is on provisional resource status, a foster care board payment is not provided. However, provisional resource parents may apply for and receive benefits for which the relative and/or fictive kin is entitled due to the placement of the child in the home (e.g., SNAP). A provisional resource home may also receive child support or any federal benefits (e.g., SSA) paid on behalf of the child, as applicable.

If a home initially opened as a provisional resource home becomes a fully approved relative or fictive kin resource home, a foster care board payment will then be provided to help support the needs of the child placed in the home. However, if the home received any child support and/or any federal benefits paid on behalf of the child while the home was on provisional status, those child support payments or federal benefits may then be transferred to the Division to reimburse the state for foster care board payments and other expenses as appropriate.

Once opened as a fully approved resource home, the resource parents may then request to care for children in foster care who are not related to or are not fictive kin of the resource parent with the understanding that additional evaluation of the home would be required to ensure that it would be an appropriate placement for children who are not related or not fictive kin to the resource parent.

Traditional resource homes are approved resource homes that are typically recruited for non-related children but, once fully approved, may provide care for both related and non-related children in DHS custody who are placed there. In addition, a traditional resource home may also serve, if desired, as an informal respite home. An informal respite home is an approved DCFS resource home that can provide temporary care (no more than seven continuous days at one time) for children in out-of-home placements when the children's full-time resource family is unable to do so and a member of the resource family's support system cannot assist (see POLICY VII-G: Alternate Care).

A DCFS employee is only permitted to serve as an agency-approved resource parent for informal respite care purposes but may not provide informal respite care for children/youth on his or her own caseload. The DCFS Director or designee must give prior approval to any employee seeking to become an agency-approved informal respite home provider. Each DCFS employee's request to serve as an informal respite care home will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. DCFS staff requesting to become informal respite providers must meet the same licensing and space requirements as traditional resource homes. Staff from a different county or a contract provider must assess and approve the home. Employees shall not use their employment status as a means to obtain information about the child's case, gain services, or receive preferential treatment.

However, in situations where Division staff are relatives of children placed in DHS custody, and it is in the best interest of the child to be placed with the relative, the DCFS Director may grant approval for the relative/employee to serve as a full-time resource home on a case-by-case basis.

For additional information, see PUB-30: Resource Parent Handbook.

## **POLICY VII-C: RESOURCE HOME ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

10/2020

In order to ensure quality resource homes, DCFS will complete a thorough home assessment for each prospective resource family. The purpose of the assessment process is to educate prospective resource 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 for Child Welfare Agencies and DCFS policy requirements for resource 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 resource parents to ensure that all appropriate criteria related to both compliance and quality are met. Prospective resource parents, with the exception of provisional 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 resource homes include but are not limited to the following.

**Age** - Applicant is at least 21 years of age.

#### ***Relationship Stability*** -

- A. In a two-parent home, both parents will be joint applicants and both parents will actively participate in the approval process. The couple will demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:
  - Death or serious illness among family members
  - Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
  - Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
  - Loss of or change in employment
- B. Marriages and divorces will be verified. Applicants must provide a copy of their marriage license to verify marriage and a copy of their most recent divorce decree to verify divorce.
- C. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above will also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective resource parent.

A resource home may not house or admit any roomer or boarder. A roomer or boarder is:

- A. A person to whom a household furnishes lodging, meals, or both, for a reasonable monthly payment; and,
- B. Not a household member.

A household member is a resident of the home who:

- A. Owns or is legally responsible for paying rent on the home (household head); or,
- B. Is in a close personal relationship with a household head; or,
- C. Is related to a household head or a to person in a close personal relationship with a household head.

Any household member who resides in the home for more than three (3) cumulative months in a calendar year must clear all of the following background checks as applicable by age of the household member (see Background Check section below for more information): Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Child Maltreatment Registry Check in any state in which the household member has lived within the preceding five years, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

***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 will have a

physical examination by a physician within twelve (12) months prior to the approval of the home study on the prospective resource family, and annually thereafter. Additional information may be requested based on the results of the physical examination report.

All children who are household members must be up to date on immunizations consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ACIP), and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), unless the immunization is contrary to the child's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.

In addition, all household members who will be caregivers of infants must have an up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.

Finally, all household members who will be caregivers of infants and children with special medical needs must have an up-to-date annual influenza vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional

*Housing- DCFS adheres to Minimum Licensing Standards (please refer to PUB 30: Resource Parent Handbook for a full list of standards) which include, but are not limited to:*

- A. The resource home will be a house, mobile home, housing unit, or apartment occupied by an individual or a family and will be the primary residence of the individual or family. The location will be zoned for single family use and will have an individual address for emergency response purposes (i.e., 911).
- B. Resource parents will reside in the same single-family unit with foster children and will not have separate living quarters.
- C. The resource home, ground, and all structures on the property will be maintained in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition and in a reasonable state of repair within community standards.
- D. The resource home will not have signage or advertising related to a supporting recruitment agency, to include signage on vehicles used to transport foster children.
- E. The resource home interior and exterior will be free from dangerous objects and conditions, and from hazardous materials.
- F. Space must be adequate to promote health and safety. Each bedroom should have at least 50 square feet of space per occupant. This includes infants sleeping in master bedrooms.
- G. The resource home will have a heating, ventilating, and air conditioning source, maintained in safe operating condition, that keeps the temperature a minimum of sixty-five degrees and a maximum of eighty-five degrees.
- H. The resource home will be free of obvious fire hazards such as defective heating equipment or improperly stored flammable materials.
- I. All firearms must be maintained in a secure, locked location and stored separately from ammunition, which must also be locked.
- J. The resource home will have proper trash and recycling disposal.
- K. The resource home will be free of rodent and insect infestation.
- L. All water hazards and dangerous pets will be assessed. Safeguard measures will be implemented, as appropriate.
- M. The resource home parents will be responsible for their own meal planning.
- N. Children of opposite sexes will have their own separate bedrooms if either child is four (4) years old or older, except for a mother in foster care with her child(ren). Resource parents will not co-sleep or bed share with a foster child of any age, including infants.

- O. Water will be provided by public water system or approved annually by the Department of Health.
- P. Prospective resource parents who rent must obtain acknowledgement from their landlord that they plan to become a resource family on landlord's property if they are approved by DCFS to be a resource home.
- Q. Prospective resource parents will be responsible for making their own decisions regarding which children to accept into their home, however, they will recognize the priority to maintain sibling groups.

**Smoking Restrictions** - DCFS will not place or permit a child in foster care in any resource home if the resource parent smokes or allows anyone else to smoke in the presence of any child in foster care unless it is in the child's best interest to be placed in or remain in the resource home. This includes the use of E-cigs and vaping. If the resource parent indicates smoking will not occur in the presence of a child in foster care, then DCFS will designate the home a "non-smoking" resource home. If a resource parent indicates that smoking will occur in the presence of a child in foster care, the resource home will be designated a "smoking" resource home, and no child may be placed or remain in the resource home unless it is in the child's best interest to be placed in or remain in the resource home. Second hand smoke is detrimental to a child's health and, as such, it is generally not in a child's best interest to be placed in a resource home that permits smoking in the presence of a child in foster care. In addition, state law prohibits smoking in a vehicle if a child in the car is under the age of 14.

**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). Recent check stubs and the previous year's income tax return are required to verify income and employment. While the foster care board payment may be provided for a child, resource parents must have sufficient personal income to care for a child even without a board payment. The foster care board payment will not be considered a part of the resource family's income.

#### **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

In addition to ensuring that homes meet the basic criteria, the Division will only place children in approved resource homes where the resource parents and appropriate members of the household have been cleared through a series of background checks: the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and an FBI Criminal Background Check (with the exception that placements may be made in provisional resource homes before FBI results are received). Any household member who resides in the home for more than three (3) cumulative months in a calendar year (e.g. an adult biological child of the resource parents who is home for the summer and holiday breaks or a relative who visits for six (6) weeks twice a year) must clear all applicable background checks.

**Child Maltreatment Central Registry** - Resource parents and all other members of the household age 14 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 will also be conducted on each household member age 14 years or older in any state of residence in which they have lived for the past five years, and in their state of employment, if different, for reports of child maltreatment.

**State Police Criminal Record Check** - Resource parents and all other members of the household age 18 and one-half years and older, excluding children in foster care, must be cleared through a State Police Criminal Record Check. As soon as possible after a household member, excluding children in foster care, reaches his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the paperwork to request the State Police Criminal Record Check must be initiated to ensure results are received by the time that household member reaches 18 and one-half years of age. The State Police Criminal Record Check will be repeated every two (2) years on all appropriate household members. If a provisional State Police Criminal Record Check enters pending status DCFS staff may work with Local Law Enforcement to obtain local verification of Criminal Record for the individual in an effort to expedite placement of the youth in the home of the relative or fictive kin. DCFS staff will ensure follow up with State Police Criminal Record Check within two (2) business days of check entering pending status.

**FBI Criminal Background Check** - Resource parents and all members of the resource home who are 18 and one-half years of age and older, excluding children in foster care, must also clear an FBI fingerprint-based Criminal Background Check. As soon as possible after a household member, excluding children in foster care, reaches his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the paperwork to request the FBI Criminal Record Check must be initiated to ensure results are received by the time that household member reaches 18 and one-half years of age. The FBI Check does not need to be repeated. Placement in a provisional resource home may be made prior to receipt of FBI Criminal Background Check results when in the best interest of the child. When placement in a provisional home occurs, DCFS will ensure that FBI Criminal Background Checks are submitted for processing within ten (10) business days. Barriers to completion within ten (10) business days should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and decisions should be made relevant to the best interests of the youth(s) placed in the provisional resource home.

**Vehicle Safety Program Check** - DCFS will check the driving record (violation points) for each prospective resource parent and other applicable members of the household. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points a resource parent may be allowed. Vehicle Safety Checks will be repeated every two (2) years.

#### **PRE-SERVICE TRAINING**

Resource parents must also complete the Division's pre-service training curriculum which includes 27 hours of Foster/Adopt PRIDE or other pre-service training curriculum approved by the Division and three hours of DCFS orientation prior to placement of a child in their home. Pre-service training shall include, but is not limited to the following topics:

- A. Legal Rights
- B. Roles, responsibilities and expectations of resource parents
- C. Agency structure, purpose, policies, and services
- D. Laws and regulations as related to resource homes and/or foster children
- E. The impact of childhood trauma
- F. Managing child behaviors
- G. Medication administration
- H. The importance of maintaining meaningful connections between the child and parentings, including regular visitation

Central Registry and State Police Criminal Background checks must be cleared, and the FBI Criminal Background Check must have been submitted before a prospective resource parent can begin pre-service training. Resource parents must also complete infant, child, and adult CPR and Standard First Aid Training and receive certification in both areas prior to placement of a child in their home.

However, new CPR and First Aid Training is not required for individuals certified as paramedics and Emergency Medication Technicians (EMTs) as long as proof of current certification is provided to DCFS staff. Current certification in Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) also meet the Minimum Licensing Standard for CPR as long as proof of current certification is provided to DCFS staff. All other medical professionals including nurses must have current CPR certification as outlined above and provide a copy of their current certification to DCFS staff.

Additional First Aid training for nurses and other medical professionals (to include those with ACLS certification) is not required. If an applicant with a current BLS certification is a paramedic, EMT, or firefighter, additional First Aid Training is not required. However, a lay person with BLS certification may have to take a First Aid class if current certification in First Aid cannot be provided.

#### **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 a resource parent applicant, both of which will be conducted in the applicant's 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 become a resource home, 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-30: Resource Parent Handbook). 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 resource home.

To complete a successful home study, the Division uses the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE). SAFE includes a series of interviews guided by questionnaires and then an evaluation using the SAFE Psychosocial Inventory and Desk Guide, which is 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 resource 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, particularly for relatives. 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 8, to address the non-compliance issue.

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

## **POLICY VII-G: ALTERNATE CARE FOR CHILDREN IN OUT-OF- HOME PLACEMENT**

10/2020

Alternate care for children in out-of-home placement may be used to provide assistance to resource parents when circumstances requiring supervision by an appropriate adult other than the resource parents exist. The Division also promotes the use of certain types of alternate care (e.g., normal age appropriate activities, interaction with a Resource Family Support System) among children and youth as a way to foster normalcy in the lives of children and youth in out-of-home placements.

There are five categories of alternate care:

- A. **Normal Age-Appropriate Activities** – Children in all out-of-home placement types will be encouraged to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and/or social activities that are age- and developmentally-appropriate for a particular child. Age- and developmentally appropriate activities are those that are generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age and that are determined to be developmentally-appropriate for a child, based his or her cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities. Examples of normal age- and developmentally appropriate activities include, but are not limited to, overnight visits with friends, school field trips, school sports or other sport leagues, faith-based activities, and short-term summer camps.

Resource parents, contract placement providers, and any private provider with whom the Division maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will uphold the reasonable and prudent parent standard in regard to children participating in age- and developmentally appropriate activities. The reasonable and prudent parent standard requires resource parents and other out-of-home placement providers to exercise careful and sensible consideration when determining whether an activity for a particular child will not only encourage the emotional and developmental growth of the child, but also maintain the health, safety, and best interests of the child.

Resource parents are responsible for monitoring extra-curricular activities to ensure a foster child does not become overwhelmed with too many activities. Children must have ample time in the resource home for relaxation, completion of daily household activities, completion of homework, and bonding with the resource family.

All contract placement providers as well as any private provider with whom the Division maintains an MOU will establish an on-site official who is authorized to apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard to ensure appropriate caregiver liability when approving an activity for a child in an out-of-home placement.

A caregiver is not liable for harm caused to a child who participates in an activity approved by the caregiver, provided the caregiver has acted in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard. This paragraph may not be interpreted as removing or limiting any existing liability protection afforded by law.

The Division will provide information and skill-based training to resource parents, contract placement providers, and private providers with whom the Division maintains an MOU regarding how to apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard for the participation of a child in age- and developmentally-appropriate activities. This training will include sharing knowledge and skill-based applications relating to the developmental stages of the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of a child.

Resource parents, contract placement providers, and private providers will notify the child's FSW if the child will spend more than 24 continuous hours outside the approved placement when participating in said activities.

- B. **Child Care** – Child care may be routinely provided as a part of an out-of-home placement case. Child care providers must be on the voucher system and licensed by The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education or on the Voluntary Child Care Registry. Every attempt should be made to place children in care in a quality child care setting.

Child care for children may also be provided as a part of an out-of-home placement case to provide assistance to foster parents for non-routine circumstances that relate to the retention and/or support of the resource home such as resource parent training. Child care provided for such purposes may be reimbursed by the Division.

- C. **Babysitting** – Babysitters may be used to provide occasional care for children in the resource home for no more than eight continuous hours at one time. Resource parents will exercise careful consideration when evaluating the character and competence of any individual asked to babysit. Resource parents may reimburse the babysitter if they choose to do so. The Division will not reimburse for baby-sitting services. Babysitters will not transport children. Background checks are not required.
- D. **Resource Family Support System** – The Resource Family Support System (RFSS) may be comprised of up to three (3) other households identified by the resource family. RFSS members may provide care for children when the resource parent is unable to do so on the occasion of anticipated or unanticipated events.

Resource parents will exercise careful consideration when evaluating the character and competence of any household asked to serve as an RFSS member. RFSS members must be at least 21 years of age. There is not a standard maximum age limit for RFSS members, but RFSS members must be physically, mentally, and emotionally capable of caring for children for up to 72 hours. Adoptive parents may not be RFSS members unless they are related to the resource parent (i.e., parent or sibling to the resource parent). Resource parents may reimburse an RFSS member if they choose to do so. The Division will not reimburse RFSS members.

Members of a Resource Family Support System may transport children and care for children in the resource home or in the home of the RFSS member. However, an RFSS member will not provide care for more than 72 continuous hours at one time regardless of the location in which care is provided and/or regardless of which RFSS member is providing care. However, for extenuating circumstances only, the Area Director may approve for a child to stay with an RFSS member for more than 72 hours, but no more than seven days. To go beyond the 72-hour timeframe requirement, a written request must be submitted to the Area Director explaining the reasons for the extension request. The Area Director must approve or deny the request in writing. The FSW will be notified when an RFSS member will provide care for more than 24 continuous hours. RFSS members taking children out-of-state for overnight trips are prohibited.

The Resource Family Support System will not be used in place of respite care or as an out-of-home placement. The number of children placed in an RFSS member household must meet all Minimum Licensing and DCFS Policy requirements.

All prospective RFSS members must be cleared through the Child Maltreatment Central Registry and a State Police Criminal Record Check. The Division will request any other state where the prospective

RFSS member has resided in the preceding five (5) years to check its child abuse and neglect registry. The Division will provide documentation in the case record that the Child Maltreatment Central Registry and State Criminal Record Checks were received on the prospective RFSS member. Documentation of at least one (1) visual inspection of the home for evaluation purposes is required of all prospective RFSS members.

The Division will check the driving record (violation points) for each potential RFSS member. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points an RFSS member resource parent may be allowed.

Documentation of at least one visual inspection of the home for evaluation purposes is required of all prospective RFSS members.

- E. **Respite Care** – When a Resource Family Support System member is not available to provide needed care on a short-term basis; respite care may be utilized in order to temporarily relieve the foster family of the ongoing responsibilities and stresses of care. There are two (2) types of respite care:

- 1) **Informal Respite** – An approved DCFS resource home that can provide temporary care when the Resource Family Support System is unable to assist or for situations in which children will be outside of the resource home for more than 72 continuous hours. An informal respite home may provide care for no more than seven continuous days at one time. Periods of respite care in an informal respite home lasting longer than seven consecutive days require approval from the Area Director or designee.

If an Area Director approved extension exceeds fourteen continuous days, the regular resource parents' board payment will be affected. If the child has stayed in any combination of RFSS or informal respite homes (i.e., outside of the regular resource home placement, the total amount of days within those alternate care types cannot exceed 14 consecutive days as board payment may be affected.

A stay in an informal respite home must be documented in CHRIS, but not as a separate/new placement. The number of children placed in an Informal Respite Home must meet all Minimum Licensing and DCFS Policy requirements.

Resource parents may reimburse an informal respite provider if they choose to do so. The Division will not reimburse an informal respite provider. The number of children placed in an Informal Respite Home must meet all Minimum Licensing and DCFS Policy requirements.

- 2) **Formal Respite** – A DCFS contract provider who supplies short-term respite care particularly when a child's current placement is at risk of disruption and/or respite is needed to prevent a residential, acute psychiatric or similar placement. Formal respite care should be provided in accordance with a family-driven, youth-guided respite plan and in coordination with a child's behavioral health treatment plan (if applicable).

Formal respite care will be provided for no more than seven (7) days per 3-month period. A stay with a Formal Respite Care provider must be documented in CHRIS, but not as a separate/new placement (provided it does not exceed the more than seven (7) days per 3-month period).

Longer periods of formal respite care require approval from the Area Director. If an approved extension exceeds 14 consecutive days, the regular foster parents' board payment will be affected. If the child has stayed in any combination of RFSS or informal respite homes before a formal respite

**stay, the total amount of days within those alternate care types (i.e., outside the regular resource home placement) cannot exceed 14 consecutive days as board payment may be affected.**

DRAFT

## EXCERPT from PUB-30: Resource Parent Handbook

10/2020

Specific approval requirements for resource homes include Minimum Licensing Standards developed by the Child Welfare Agency Review Board, which are then monitored by the DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education's Placement and Residential Licensing Unit. Other specific approval requirements for resource homes are specific to DCFS policy and procedure. Resource home requirements include personal qualifications of applicants and household members as well as the physical aspects of their homes. Families and their homes must continue to meet the resource home approval requirements for the duration of their service as a resource home.

The lists of requirements on the following pages are organized by noting a primary requirement as a lettered item (A, B, C, etc.). Additional details related to the primary requirement are provided next to the arrow symbol.

### Basic Resource Parent and Household Member Applicant Qualifications

- A. **Be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.**
  - An applicant home will not be approved as a resource home if even one applicant is under the age of 21 unless a policy waiver is obtained. A policy waiver may only be approved in rare circumstances for provisional homes.
- B. **Be a United States citizen or a legal permanent resident.**
  - Persons who are undocumented may be considered as provisional resource home applicants only for their relatives or fictive kin.
- C. **May be single or part of a couple.**
  - In a two-parent home, the couple will be joint applicants. Each person will actively participate in the approval process. This joint family commitment will be re-evaluated annually.
- D. **Be physically, mentally, and emotionally capable of caring for children.**
  - To help the Division make this assessment the resource parent applicant must provide the Division with the health history of each household member, in addition to the physical exam required for approval. This history will include physical and mental health services and treatment received as well as a list of currently prescribed medication and any other medications or other substances currently taken.
  - A physical disability in either applicant that does not interfere with the ability to give adequate care to a child will not be a barrier to resource parent approval. The impact of the disability on the individual will be evaluated, to include whether it may have significance to a specific child in foster care.
  - All children who are household members must be up to date on immunizations consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ACIP), and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), unless the immunization is contrary to the child's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.
  - All household members who will be caregivers of infants must have an up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.
  - All household members who will be caregivers of infants and children with special medical needs must have an up-to-date annual influenza vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.
- E. **Demonstrate stability and have adequate support.**
  - In assessing relationship stability and other support systems, considerations may include major life changes like:
    - Death or serious illness among family members;
    - Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship;
    - Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in); and
    - Loss of or change in employment.

- All resource parents will need a strong support system in order to assist them in their role as resource parents and, in turn, better serve children in foster care. Please see information regarding the Resource Family Support System and other types of alternate care.
- F. **Have employment/work schedule conducive to caring for children.**
  - Both parents may be employed outside the home.
  - If employment is seasonal, the applicant must have compensatory income or savings in the off seasons.
  - Demands made on resource parents' time by overtime work, revolving shifts, etc. are considered pertinent to the ability to provide adequate care for a child in foster care.
  - Placing children will be done based on careful evaluation of what is best for each child to include consideration of plans for the care and supervision of children in foster care before and after school, during school holidays and vacations, and when children are ill and absent from school.
- G. **Respect the religious preferences of children in foster care and their birth/legal family.**
  - A resource parent applicant's lack of religious affiliation or religious faith will not be a barrier to approval.
  - A resource parent must be able to present his/her own religious beliefs to children in foster care in such a way as to take into consideration the child's own religious background.
  - A resource parent must never attempt to convert or force his/her own religious beliefs on a child in foster care whose religious background differs from their own.
- H. **Have an education sufficient to allow him or to function in home, job, and community settings and ensure education is valued in his or her home.**
  - A resource parent must have a positive attitude toward both academic and vocational education and be aware of local education facilities and resources.
  - A resource parent must be willing to meet the child's individual educational needs, including participating in the development and implementation of any special education plans or behavioral accommodations as needed.
  - At least one resource parent in the home must have functional literacy, such as having the ability to read medication labels, follow doctor's instructions, and administer proper dosages of medication.
- I. **Demonstrate financial stability and supply documentation of sufficient financial resources.**
  - The applicant must have sufficient, reliable income to ensure the family's stability and security, without a board payment.
  - An applicant must provide documentation of sufficient financial resources to meet his or her needs. This documentation will include a copy of the applicant's tax return and recent paycheck stubs.
  - Management of income will be considered more important than amount of income.
  - 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., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Social Security Income (SSI), Temporary Employment Assistance (TEA) benefits, etc.) to meet those needs. DCFS will make some exceptions to this for some provisional applicants depending on the totality of their financial and other circumstances. However, no exceptions will be made for regular resource homes.
- J. Provide documentation of homeowner's or renter's insurance and general liability insurance (which may be included in the homeowner's policy).
- K. If a resource parent applicant does not own the home in which he or she lives, the person who owns the home must verify in writing via CFS-484: Landlord Notification, that he/she has no objections to the applicant caring for children in foster care in the home.

### **Resource Parent Personal Characteristics**

Applicants must have the personal characteristics that will enable them to assume the responsibility of caring for children in foster care who have been traumatized. This includes the ability to provide a nurturing family life experience for the child including guidance, intellectual stimulation, affection, and appropriate discipline. Personal characteristics include:

- A. Capacity to give love, affection, and care to the child and respond to the child's needs without expecting the child to return love and affection.

- B. A working knowledge of child growth and development, including knowledge of child care, milestones in development, and nutrition.
- C. Equal attention to the physical and emotional needs of children.
- D. Willingness to allow for socialization of the child in foster care with his/her peers.
- E. Flexibility in expectations, attitudes, and behavior in relation to meeting the needs of each child and recognition of the trauma caused by maltreatment and removal from the home.
- F. Ethical standards and values conducive to the well-being of children.
- G. Ability to accept a child's background without passing moral judgment on the child or the child's birth or legal family.
- H. Ability to accept and strengthen a child's relationship with his or her birth/legal family.
- I. Ability and willingness to accept, understand, and utilize training, guidance and supervision from the child-placing agency or other professionals in order to meet the needs of children in care and their families of origin.
- J. Emotional stability, including a satisfactory method of handling angry feelings.
- K. Acceptance of your own childhood experiences.
- L. Absence of any qualities which indicate potential to abuse or neglect children in your care.
- M. Capacity to absorb the presence of a child in care without undue disruption to your own family life.
- N. Ability to cope with the departure of the child in foster care.
- O. Maturity to exercise good judgment and appropriate use of authority, balanced with a degree of playfulness and flexibility necessary to care for children.

## **Physical Requirements of the Home**

### **Interior of Home:**

- A. Must allow resource parents to reside in the same single-family unit with foster children (i.e., no separate living quarters for resource parents).
- B. Must be clean and free from dangerous objects and conditions and from hazardous materials.
  - This applies to interior halls and doors which must not be blocked or cluttered to prevent easy passage or exit.
- C. Must be free of rodent and insect infestation.
- D. Must be a smoke-free environment. Resource parents must sign a certification indicating that the home is smoke free and that there is no use of vaping or e-cigarettes in the home.
- E. Shall have a continuous supply of sanitary drinking water.
  - If the source is not a municipal water system, the water will be tested and approved by the Arkansas Department of Health annually.
    - The Arkansas Department of Health will only conduct the initial inspection for the approval of the resource home. The annual check must be conducted by the home owner. The sample cups can be obtained from the local Department of Health along with procedures for collection and submission. The Department of Health provides training for homeowners on using the cups for completion of the annual check. DCFS will not reimburse the cost of water testing.
  - If a water supply does not pass inspection, a CFS-455: Consent for Health Department Services, Alternate Compliance of Water Supply Agreement must be established with the family.
  - If the family will use bottled water (and purified water for bathing if infants or children under the age of 5 placed in the home), this must be noted on the CFS-455, signed by the resource parents, and updated annually.
- F. Must be equipped with a properly operating kitchen that includes a sink with hot and cold running water, refrigerator, stove, and oven.
- G. Must have at least one (1) flush toilet, one sink with running water, and one bathtub or shower with hot and cold running water.
- H. Must have adequate lighting, ventilation, and plumbing for safe and comfortable living.
  - This applies to bedrooms which must have windows that provide natural light and ventilation.
- I. Must have a heating, ventilating, and air conditioning source, maintained in safe operating condition, that keeps the temperature a minimum of sixty-five degrees and a maximum of eighty-five degrees.



- J. Must have adequate space for privacy, play, and study for all household members.
- K. Must have sufficient seating for the family to eat together.
- L. Must provide adequate space for storing clothing and personal belongings for each child, in or near their bedroom.
- M. Must have adequate toys that are safe and developmentally appropriate for children who will be placed in the home.
- N. Must be free of obvious fire hazards (e.g., defective electrical appliances or electrical cords, excessive use of extension cords, defective heating equipment) or improperly stored flammable materials.
  - This includes ensure all heating units (e.g., radiators, fireplaces, wood stoves, gas or electric heaters, steam and hot water pipes) with hot external areas within reach of children are screened or otherwise shielded.
- O. Must have an operational smoke detector on each level of occupancy of the foster home.
- P. Must have an operational smoke detector in each bedroom.
- Q. Must have an operational smoke detector(s) within ten (10) feet of the kitchen.
- R. Must have an operational chemical fire extinguisher, readily accessible, near the cooking area of the home.
- S. Must have a carbon monoxide detector on each level of occupancy of the foster home and near all sleeping areas.
- T. Must have a safe operating water heater that has a recommended temperature at or below 120-degree Fahrenheit as tested at the plumbing fixture nearest the water heater.
- U. Must maintain adequate first aid supplies for emergencies.
- V. Must have proper trash and recycling disposal in such a way as not to constitute a health or safety hazard and keep all garbage and other waste in a suitable covered receptacle.
- W. Must store all poisonous materials, cleaning supplies, other hazardous materials (e.g., insecticides, gasoline, hazardous tools, knives), and alcoholic beverages, in an area not readily accessible to children, as appropriate for the age and development of each child.
- X. Must have an operational telephone.
  - Working cell phones kept on the premises are acceptable, but the phone will be accessible for children.
- Y. Must post emergency phone numbers (911, fire, ambulance, poison control, and responsible adult to contact in case of emergency) in a prominent place.
- Z. Must maintain all firearms in a secure, locked location or secured by a trigger lock. Securing of firearms extends to any weapon which could reasonably be a threat to a child.
- AA. Must secure and lock all ammunition separately from firearms unless they are stored in a safe, hand gun safe, or a long gun safe.
- BB. Ensure there is an agency approved safety plan for any noted hazards.
  - The safety plan will be signed by all caregivers in the resource home and an agency representative.
- CC. Must provide proof of current rabies vaccinations as required by Arkansas law for all household pets.
- DD. Must provide to DCFS and each child in foster care, as age and developmentally appropriate, information about the use and location of any methods of surveillance in the resource home.
  - This includes the use of baby monitors or other forms of surveillance.
  - Formal written notification detailing use of the surveillance and location of all devices will be provided to DCFS via CFS-448.
- EE. Must provide satisfactory living space for all persons in the home.
  - The number of children in foster care placed in a resource home will be limited by the number of persons who can satisfactorily live within the physical limits of the home.
  - Space requirements may be waived on a case by case basis for provisional resource homes.
- FF. The agency will ensure a current floor plan of the home with room dimensions for all rooms used for sleeping are kept in the resource home record.

**Exterior of Home/Community:**

- A. Must be a house, mobile home, housing unit, or apartment occupied by an individual or a family that is the primary residence of the individual or family. The location will be zoned for single family use and will have an individual address for emergency response purposes (i.e., 911).

- B. Grounds, and all structures on the property will be maintained in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition and in a reasonable state of repair within community standards.
- C. Must be clean and free from dangerous objects and conditions and from hazardous materials.
- D. Must be accessible to community resources needed by foster children to ensure access to available education and religious training, recreation, parental visiting, supervision by the Division, and medical care.
- E. Must have at least one (1) exterior door that exits directly to the outside or the home will have an alternate fire escape route.
- F. Must be free from physical hazards (e.g., debris, trash, uncovered cisterns) that would endanger the safety of children.
  - This includes the yard, garage, carport, any storage areas, basement, and attic (if applicable and accessible).
- G. Must be large enough to provide ample outdoor play space for children.
- H. Must have a fence or barrier prevent a child's access to a busy street or highway or other dangerous area.
- I. Must ensure any outdoor play equipment is safe, hazard-free, and properly anchored.
- J. Must not have signage or advertising related to a supporting recruitment agency, to include signage on vehicles used to transport foster children.
- K. If the applicant resides in a manufactured home, the home must be properly installed and stabilized. If the manufactured home is located in a mobile home park, there must be sufficient fenced play space outside.
- L. Manufactured homes, used as resource homes, will have an agency approved safety plan for tornado safety. The safety plan will be signed by all caregivers in the home and an agency representative.
- M. Must enclose or must have an approved manually or power-operated child safety cover for all in ground pools that meets the standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials adopted by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.
  - An "approved safety pool cover" means a manually or power-operated safety pool cover that meets all of the performance standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), in compliance with standard F1346-91. Please note that solar pool covers and winter pool covers are not safety covers. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) (1996) requires that a pool cover be able to hold a minimum of 485 pounds per five square feet in order to qualify as a safety cover.
- N. In ground pools without an approved child safety cover will be protected by an enclosure (e.g., wall, fence, or barrier) that surrounds the pool area.
- O. Unless local code provides otherwise a pool enclosure will meet the following:
  - 1) Entirely enclose the pool area;
  - 2) Be at least 5 feet high;
  - 3) Have no openings other than doors or gates through which an object of 4 inches in diameter can pass;
  - 4) Have no openings, handholds, or footholds accessible from the exterior side that can be used to climb the barrier;
  - 5) Be at least 20 inches from the water's edge.
- P. Gates or other methods of access to the pool area will meet the following:
  - 1) Open outward from the pool;
  - 2) Be self-closing and self-latching;
  - 3) Have a latch:
    - i. Located at least fifty-four inches above the underlying ground;
    - ii. Located on the pool side of the gate with the latch's release mechanism located at least five inches below the top of the gate and no opening greater than one-half inch within twenty-four inches of the release mechanism; or
    - iii. Located at any height if secured by a padlock or similar device which requires a key, electric opening, or integral combination.
- Q. The wall of a house or other building will not be used in lieu of a barrier to the pool with the exception of a solid wall that does not contain any windows, doors, or other openings. When a wall is used as a barrier the remaining three sides will be protected by an enclosure (wall, fence, or barrier) that surrounds the pool area **or** have an approved child safety cover. The enclosure will meet the following:

- R. All children who are household members must be up to date on immunizations consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ACIP), and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), unless the immunization is contrary to the child's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.
- S. All household members who will be caregivers of infants must have an up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.
- T. All household members who will be caregivers of infants and children with special medical needs must have an up-to-date annual influenza vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional.
  - 1) Entirely encloses the pool area;
  - 2) Be at least 5 feet high;
  - 3) Have no openings other than doors or gates through which an object of 4 inches in diameter can pass;
  - 4) Have no openings, handholds, or footholds accessible from the exterior side that can be used to climb the barrier;
  - 5) Be at least 20 inches from the water's edge.
  - 6) Provides a gate or method of access to the pool area that will meet the following:
    - i. Opens outward from the pool;
    - ii. Be self-closing and self-latching;
    - iii. Have a latch:
      - a. Located at least fifty-four inches above the underlying ground;
      - b. Located on the pool side of the gate with the latch's release mechanism located at least five inches below the top of the gate and no opening greater than one-half inch within twenty-four inches of the release mechanism; or
      - c. Located at any height if secured by a padlock or similar device which requires a key, electric opening, or integral combination.
- U. All above ground pools will have the following:
  - 1) Non-climbable exterior side walls with a minimum height of 4 feet;
  - 2) Access ladders or steps that are removable and able to be secured when the pool is not in use.
- V. All portable pools (inflatable and wading pools) will be fenced or emptied and stored after every use.
- W. Swimming pools will be equipped with a life saving device such as a ring buoy.
- X. Swimming pools that cannot be emptied after each use will have a working pump and filtering system.
- Y. Hot tubs and spas will have locking safety covers that are locked when not in use.
- Z. Must have a water safety plan for supervision of children during water activities in the resource home record. The plan will be signed by all caregivers in the resource home and an agency representative.

### **Sleeping Arrangement Requirements**

- A. Each household occupant will have a bedroom that provides privacy.
- B. Children in foster care must sleep in a bedroom, not in a living room, dining room, or any other room where others may pass through.
- C. Each bedroom, including the master bedroom, must have at least fifty (50) square feet of floor space per occupant.
- D. Each bedroom is used for children in foster care will have a window to the outside which is capable of serving as an emergency escape.
- E. Bars, grilles, grates, or other items that block access to the window are permitted only if they can be removed from the inside without the use of a key, tool, or force greater than that required for normal operation of the window.
  - In this event, each such bedroom will have a working smoke detector in the bedroom.
- F. No more than four (4) children will share a bedroom.

- G. Each child in foster care will be provided a safe bedroom as appropriate for the child's needs and age, that includes a bed with a mattress, sheets, pillow, pillowcase, and adequate cover, all in good condition, and similar to other household members.
- H. Bedding will be changed at least weekly, more often if needed.
- I. Children of the opposite sex will not share the same bedroom if either child is four (4) years old or older, except for a parent in foster care with her child.
- J. No children will share a bed if either child is four (4) years old or older.
- K. No child under age six (6) will occupy a top bunk.
- L. Children in foster care, except infants under two (2) years, will not share a sleeping room with adults.
  - This age would increase through age four (4) for a grandparent to the child and a teen parent in foster care with her child.
- M. Resource parents will not co-sleep or bed share with a foster child of any age, including infants.
- N. All cribs used for children will have current certification of compliance with Consumer Product Safety Guidelines standards.
- O. Children twelve (12) months of age and below will be placed flat on their backs to sleep, in accordance with American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines, to lessen the risk of suffocation and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
  - If a child rolls over on his/her own, it is not required to reposition the child).
  - If there is a medical reason a child cannot sleep on his/her back, a signed statement from the child's physician will be in the file stating the reason, the sleep position indicated, and the timeframe required.
- P. Rock and plays and similar devices are permissible for daily use but may not be the primary place of sleep for an infant.

## **Transportation**

- A. A resource parent applicant must have their own mode of transportation available for children in their care to participate in necessary school, recreation, and medical activities.
- B. A resource parent applicant must provide documentation demonstrating that all vehicles owned by the applicant have liability insurance.
- C. Any vehicle used to transport children in foster care must be maintained in compliance with Arkansas motor vehicle laws and must be insured.
- D. A resource parent applicant, and anyone else who would transport children in foster care, must have a valid driver's license.
  - The requirement for a driver's license may be waived for provisional applicants on a case by case basis if an acceptable plan to transport the children placed in their home to school, court dates, medical appointments, etc. is approved.
- E. Children must be transported according to Arkansas law, including, but not limited to, use of safety belts, child safety seats, and smoking restrictions.
  - Current law requires a child safety seat for children who are age 5 and younger and children who weigh less than 60 pounds. All other children must be restrained by safety belts.
  - Current law prohibits smoking in any motor vehicle in which a child who is less than 14 years of age is a passenger.

## **Maximum Capacity**

Minimum Licensing Standards for Resource Homes establishes the guidelines for maximum capacity of children placed in each individual resource home. Resource homes will have no more than five (5) children in care placed in their home at one time. The resource home may care for up to eight (8) children, including their own children. This includes placement and respite care. Including the resource parents' biological children, the resource home may have no more than two (2) children under the age of two (2) and no more than three (3) children under the age of six (6). The sole exception to the above limits will be in those instances in which the placement of a sibling group in a resource home with no other children in the home would exceed the limits.

In addition, the number of children in a resource home will be determined by the capacities and skills of the resource parents, by physical space available for children, and by the resource parents' ability to meet the needs of all children present in the home. At no point will a resource home also serve as a licensed child care facility.

Resource parents must have legal custody or guardianship of any children (other than children in foster care) in the home that are not their birth children or relatives. Resource parents will not keep children for more than one child-placing agency. Resource parents will not provide babysitting or child care services for other children on a regular basis in their home.

Birth/legal children of the prospective resource parents will take part in the resource home assessment. The extent of their involvement will be determined by their age and level of maturity. These children must be in agreement with their parents' decision to become resource parents. Their agreement must be reevaluated annually.

### **Resource Parent Expectations**

Being a resource parent is not an easy task, but a rewarding one! While each and every responsibility of a resource parent cannot be captured on paper, below are a list of basic expectations to consider when determining if you want to become a resource parent.

#### **Daily Activities**

- A. Provide structure and daily activities designed to promote the individual physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development of the children in your home.
- B. Cooperate with the Division to help the children in foster care maintain an awareness of their past, a record of the present, and a plan for the future.
- C. Keep a life book for each child in their care that includes periodic photographs of the child and a record of the child's memberships, activities, and participation in extracurricular, school, or church activities.
- D. Work with children in your care to assume responsibilities reasonable for the child's age and ability and similar to those expected of your own children, if applicable.
- E. Train children in your care to perform age appropriate self-care and home maintenance tasks such as cooking and doing dishes.
- F. Instruct each child in good grooming and personal hygiene habits.
- G. Ensure each child is provided with opportunities for regular recreational activities and exercise.
- H. Ensure each child is provided with age-appropriate activities and equipment.
- I. Monitor and limit the use of television, videos, computer games and other screen time activities.
- J. Remain responsible for meal planning that ensures adequate and nutritious food.

#### **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

- A. Provide each child with his/her own clean, well-fitting, attractive, seasonal clothing appropriate to age, sex, individual needs, and comparable to the community standards, with assistance from DCFS.
- B. Include children in the selection of their own clothing, whenever possible and appropriate.
- C. Allow children to bring their personal belongings to the resource home and acquire additional belongings.
- D. Send all personal clothing and belongings with the children when they leave the resource home.

#### **Discipline**

The following constitutes the Division's discipline policy:

- A. The primary goal of discipline will be to teach rather than punish.
- B. Discipline will be administered with kindness and understanding and appropriately based on the child's age, development, and history, including trauma history.
- C. Discipline will focus on teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control. Appropriate forms of discipline may include time-outs, redirection, denial of privileges, and explanation of expectations depending on the particular child.
- D. Resource parents will teach and train each child with techniques that stress praise and encouragement;

- E. Resource parents will establish well-defined rules that set the expectations and limits of behavior that are relevant to the child's level of growth, development, and trauma history, and will be applied in a consistent manner.
- F. Resource parents are **prohibited** from using corporal punishment on children in foster care. Other methods of discipline that are unacceptable for use by resource parents with children in foster care include but are not limited to:
  - 1) Physical punishment threatened or inflicted in any manner, such as spanking hitting, pinching, pulling hair, slapping, kicking, twisting arm, forced fixed body positions, etc.;
  - 2) Cruel, severe, or humiliating actions, such as washing mouth with soap, taping or obstructing child's mouth, placing painful or unpleasant tasting substances in mouth, on lips, or any type of public humiliation;
  - 3) Denial of meals, clothing, shelter, case plan activities, or any denial of basic rights;
  - 4) Denial of parental, sibling, or other family visits or denial of any type of other contact with family members unless there are established safety concerns;
  - 5) Use of lewd or obscene language;
  - 6) Use of derogatory comments about the child, the child's family and/or friends, race, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation;
  - 7) Assignment of extremely strenuous work or exercise;
  - 8) Locked isolation of any kind;
  - 9) Punishment of any kind for poor toilet habits;
  - 10) Restriction to a dark room or area;
  - 11) Restriction to a room for more than a short period of time without periodic observation;
  - 12) Mechanical/chemical restraints.
- G. Neither a resource parent nor DCFS can give permission to the school to spank a child in foster care.
- H. A child will not be allowed to administer discipline, with exception to teen parents disciplining their own children under the supervision and guidance of the resource parent.
- I. Searches of a child or a child's personal property will be for reasons limited to safety and security of children and their foster family, or in cases of suspected theft.

#### Health Care

- A. Cooperate with the Division in medical and dental care planning for children in their care.
- B. Make medical and dental appointments as needed while also encouraging and assisting teenagers placed in the home to make their own medical and dental appointments as developmentally appropriate.
- C. Accompany the child to the initial health screening, comprehensive health screening, and any on-going physical or mental health services provided whenever possible. If this is not possible, the resource parent will be available by telephone to the person conducting the screening.
- D. Welcome the child's biological or legal parent to also attend medical and dental appointments as appropriate and per any applicable court orders.
- E. Consult with the health care provider about the child's health care needs.
- F. Report any corrective or follow-up medical or dental care the child needs to the Division.
- G. Have their own transportation available and be responsible for arranging transportation for children in foster care to all necessary medical and dental appointments. Area Directors may grant a waiver in situations where provisional resource families have been recruited specifically for a child.
- H. Ensure that each child has sufficient sleep for his/her age and physical condition.

#### Education

- A. Cooperate with DCFS and take part in the selection and arrangement for educational programs appropriate for the child's age, abilities, and case plan.
- B. Attend school conferences concerning children in their care and plan with school personnel when there are school problems.
- C. Welcome the child's biological or legal parent to also attend any school conferences or other school-related activities as appropriate and per any applicable court orders.

- D. Cooperate with DCFS in ensuring that children remain in their school of origin, to the extent reasonable and practical.
- E. Report serious situations that may require DCFS involvement to DCFS (e.g., any situation that may affect the case plan or a situation that puts the child in jeopardy of suspension or expulsion).
- F. Be aware that any deviation from public education (use of private education or home schooling) must have prior authorization from the DCFS Director.

#### **Religious and Ethnic Heritage**

- A. Recognize, encourage, and support the religious beliefs, ethnic heritage, and language of children in their care.
- B. Arrange transportation to religious services or ethnic events for a child whose beliefs and practices are different from their own and who wishes to attend such events.
- C. Not coerce children into participation in religious activities or ethnic events against their will.

#### **Acceptance of DCFS Regulations**

- A. Abide by DCFS policy and procedures and accept supervision by DCFS.
- B. Strive to provide continuous care of each child placed in your home until such time as a permanent plan is implemented for each child.
- C. Discuss issues related to the placement of children in your home with DCFS and determine what adjustments are needed to provide more suitable placement for the child.

#### **Medication**

- A. Administer medications only in accordance with directions on the label.
- B. Be aware of possible side effects of all medications.
- C. All over the counter medications will be stored in an area not readily accessible to children, according to the age and development of each child in the home.
- D. All prescription medications excluding Epi-pens, inhalers, and Glucagon kits will be locked. An age-appropriate and developmentally capable child may be provided or have access to non-narcotic prescriptions with an approved safety plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, birth control, acne cream, topical creams.
- E. Store medication in accordance with pharmaceutical recommendations.
- F. Log all medications at the time the medication is administered, using CFS-364: Medication Log and the logs must include the following:
  - 1. Child's name
  - 2. Time and date
  - 3. Medication and dosage
  - 4. Initials of the person administering the medication
- G. Provide age appropriate (considering both chronological and developmental age) children with a daily supply of medication (over-the-counter or prescription) for use when the child is away from the home during the times the dose is needed.
  - Examples include pain relievers, fever reducers, and anti-inflammatory and other related medications, or prescribed antibiotics or inhalers.
  - These medications must be logged at the time they are given to the child.

#### **Emergency Planning**

- A. Develop a plan for evacuating the house in the event of a fire and a plan for seeking shelter during a storm or tornado.
  - Plans must outline the exits in the home, be approved by DCFS, and must be posted within the home.
- B. Share the evacuation plan with each child and make sure each child understands the procedures at the time he or she is placed in the home.
- C. Conduct emergency evacuation drills when each new child enters the home and at least quarterly thereafter.
  - Document all drills via CFS-369: Tornado and Fire Drill Log. This documentation will reflect:

- Date and time of drill;
- Persons participating in drill;
- Length of time needed to clear the home.

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