

FOSTER HOME LICENSING

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I. SECTION .0000 | MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

The Mission, Vision and Values of the North Carolina Division of Social Services (Division) are imbedded within the continuum of child welfare services, which include Foster Home Licensing. By adopting a common mission, vision and values, the Division, all 100 county departments of social services and private child-placing agencies for foster care will share a commitment to excellence.

The mission makes our purpose clear and tells everyone whom we are. Ensuring safe, permanent, nurturing families for children is our charge, whether we work in Intensive Family Preservation, Child Protective Services, CPS In-Home Services, Foster Care, or Adoptions.

The **vision** is a clear statement of what we believe the child welfare system should look like. It is the ideal; it is what we want the system to look like through the eyes of the families and children whom we serve. A common vision keeps us focused and challenged to always find ways to improve system performance, despite the very real considerations of resource limitations and other constraints. The **values** are what we promise to do, the link between our agencies and the public. They provide a guide for service delivery and staff behavior. Collectively, the mission, vision and values are a strong statement of our advocacy for families and children who come in contact with the child welfare system.

A. Mission

The Division of Social Services, Child Welfare Services Section is committed to providing family-centered services to children and families to achieve well-being through ensuring self-sufficiency, support, safety, and permanence.

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B. Vision

The vision of the Division is that all programs administered by the Division of Social Services will embrace family-centered practice principles and provide services that promote security and safety for all. This means that every child in North Carolina will grow up in a safe, permanent, self-sufficient family where well-being needs of all are met.

C. Values

Foster home licensing is a crucial part of North Carolina's child welfare system. North Carolina licenses foster homes to assure that children in out-of-home care have safe, nurturing homes that will help them grow and reach their full potential.

To improve the care and safety of children, licensing social workers must focus on relationships. Foster parents are encouraged to view the licensing worker as their social worker. Through an ongoing relationship between the foster parent and the licensing social worker, the foster home becomes more and more adept at meeting the specific needs of children in the home.

The licensing process gives the licensing worker an understanding of the strengths and supports needed for the individual foster parents and of the foster home as a unit. Rather than being viewed as an inspector, the effective licensing worker strives to be seen as a partner, a colleague, and an advocate to make the child welfare system work effectively for each child.

Service delivery does not exist in a vacuum. To best serve the needs of children and families, all agencies that work with the family should work cooperatively in ways that maximize service delivery and resources. To the fullest extent possible, service providers should be within the family's community, convenient for the family and child.

It is important to note the foundational philosophy of North Carolina's Child Welfare System is grounded in family-centered practice delivered within a System of Care framework. The six family-centered principles of partnership are:

- Everyone desires respect
- Everyone needs to be heard
- Everyone has strengths
- Judgments can wait
- Partners share power
- Partnership is a process

The foundational philosophy of the NC System of Care (hereinafter SOC) is family centered practice. The six SOC Principles are:

- Interagency collaboration
- Individualized strengths-based care
- Cultural competence
- Child and family involvement

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- Community based services
- Accountability

D. Purpose of the Manual

Foster home licensing is a crucial part of North Carolina’s child welfare system. The purpose of this manual is to provide guidance to foster home licensing social workers during the assessment and recommendation of foster parents for licensure and re-licensure. Foster home licensure policy is based on North Carolina General Statutes and Administrative Rules. Administrative rules related to foster home licensing are found in the Administrative Code [10A NCAC 70E](#). Policies and procedures are provided after each administrative rule.

II. SECTION .0600 | GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. [10A NCAC 70E .0601](#) SCOPE

The subsections of this rule read:

- (a) The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services is the licensing authority for family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes.
- (b) The rules in this Subchapter apply to the licensing of family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes and those persons who receive children for the purpose of placement in family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes.

The North Carolina Division of Social Services is the Licensing Authority for family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes. Supervising agencies (county departments of social services and licensed private child-placing agencies for foster care) submit licensing applications and requests for other licensing actions to the Licensing Authority. When these materials are received, the Licensing Authority reviews them for compliance with rules, policies, standards, and procedures for licensing. It is the responsibility of the Licensing Authority to approve or deny these requests. The Regulatory and Licensing Services Office within the Division of Social Services completes all reviews and grants all licensing actions. Contact information for the Licensing Authority is:

N. C. Division of Social Services
Regulatory and Licensing Services
952 Old U. S. 70 Highway
Black Mountain, N. C. 28711
Phone: 828-669-3388
Fax: 828-669-3365

1. Relevant Statutes [G.S. § 131D, Article 1A](#)

It is important that foster home licensing social workers know the legal basis for foster home licensing so they can help the foster families that they supervise understand the system. The statutory basis for foster care and other licensing functions is found in G.S. §131D, Article 1A.

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G.S. § 131D-10.5

This statute also delegates authority to the North Carolina Social Services Commission to establish administrative rules for family foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, residential child-care, and child-placing agencies. Foster Home licensing rules established by the North Carolina Social Services Commission can be found in North Carolina Administrative code, 10A NCAC 70E.

G.S. § 131D, Article 1A

This statute reads:

It is the policy of this State to strengthen and preserve the family as a unit consistent with a high priority of protecting children's welfare. When a child requires care outside the family unit, it is the duty of the State to assure that the quality of substitute care is as close as possible to the care and nurturing that society expects of a family. However, the State recognizes there are instances when protecting a child's welfare outweighs reunifying the family unit, and as such, the care of residential care facilities providing high quality services that include meeting the children's educational needs as determined by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services can satisfy the standard of protecting a child's welfare, regardless of the child's age, particularly when the sibling groups can be kept intact.

The purpose of this Article is to assign the authority to protect the health, safety and well-being of children separated from or being cared for away from their families. (1983, c. 637, s. 2; 2009-408, s. 1.)

This statute establishes the state's authority for the placing of children in out-of-home care. This statute clearly specifies the state's duty to assure that the quality of substitute care is as close as possible to the care and nurturing that society expects families to provide to their children. To provide foster care, a license is required. To obtain and maintain a license the family must meet minimum standards. Licensing standards exist to protect the child, the child's parents, foster parents, and the agency providing child-placing services. An interpretation of this general statute in conjunction with the rules, 10A NCAC 70E for foster home licensing, will show which rules are specified in law and which rules are derived from law.

For example, G.S. § 131D-10.3A (Mandatory criminal checks) clearly requires criminal history checks for each applicant. Other rules are derived from the language of the law. Another requirement is that all licensing application materials shall be submitted at one time to the Licensing Authority (G.S. § 131D-10.6. Powers and duties of the Department). In addition to other powers and duties prescribed by law, the Department shall exercise the following powers and duties: G.S. § 131D-10.6.(5) "prescribe the form in which the applications for licensure or a request for waiver of Commission rules shall be submitted."

B. 10A NCAC 70E. 0602 DEFINITIONS

Except when the context of the Rule indicates that the term has a different meaning the following definitions shall apply to the rules in Subchapter 70E:

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(1) "Agency" means a child placing agency as defined in [G.S. § 131D-10.2](#) that is authorized by law to receive children for purposes of placement in foster homes or adoptive homes.

This term is used to indicate both private agencies licensed by the NC DSS to provide foster care and public county department of social services authorized by law to provide foster care. Public and private agencies are held to the same licensing standards.

(2) "Family Foster Home" has the meaning as defined in [G.S. § 131D-10.2\(8\)](#).

The private residence of one or more individuals who permanently reside as members of the household and who provide continuing full-time foster care for a child(ren) who are placed there by a child-placing agency or who provide continuing full-time foster care for two or more children who are unrelated to the adult members of the household by blood, marriage, guardianship, or adoption.

(3) "Family Foster Care" means a planned, goal-directed service in which the temporary protection and care of children take place in a family foster home. Family foster care is a child welfare service for children and their parents who must live apart from each other for a period of time due to abuse, neglect, dependency, or other circumstances necessitating out-of-home care.

(4) "Licensing Authority" means the North Carolina Division of Social Services.

(5) "Owner" means any person who holds an ownership interest of five percent or more of the applicant. A person includes a sole proprietor, co-owner, partner or shareholder, principal or affiliate, or any person who is the applicant or any owner of the applicant.

(6) "Supervising Agency" means a county department of social services or a private child-placing agency that is authorized by law to receive children for purposes of placement in foster homes or adoptive homes. Supervising agencies are responsible for recruiting, training, and supporting foster parents. Supervising agencies recommend the licensure of foster homes to the licensing authority.

(7) "Therapeutic Foster Care" means a foster home where the foster parent has received additional training in providing care to children with behavioral mental health or substance abuse problems.

C. OTHER DEFINITIONS

- "Child" as defined in [G.S. § 131D-10.2](#) means o (1) an individual less than 18 years of age who has not been emancipated under the provisions of Article 35 of Chapter 7B of the North Carolina General Statutes or o (2) any individual from 18 to 21 years of age who meets the requirement to voluntarily receive child welfare services. (Refer to the LINKS policy in the [NC Child Welfare Manual](#) for more information).
- Foster Parent" means any individual 21 years of age or older who is currently licensed by the State to provide foster care.

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- “Foster Home Licensing Social Worker” means a social worker assigned the specific duties of recruiting, selecting, training, and recommending applicants to be licensed as family foster care parents or therapeutic foster care parents. Additional duties may include counseling, organizing, and advocating for foster parents as well as providing assistance sufficient for foster parents to be relicensed as decided by the supervising agency.
- Administrative Rule [10A NCAC 70G .0501](#) defines the qualifications for a Foster Home Licensing Social Worker and caseload standards. A Foster Home Licensing Social Worker must meet the requirements of a Social Worker II as defined by the North Carolina [Office of State Human Resources](#).

III. SECTION .0700 | LICENSING REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

A. [10A NCAC 70E .0701](#) LICENSING AUTHORITY FUNCTION

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) The supervising agency shall submit the licensing application for family foster care and therapeutic foster care to the licensing authority. When the licensing authority receives licensing materials, the licensing authority shall review the licensing materials relative to standards, policies, and procedures for licensing. The licensing authority shall communicate with the supervising agency submitting the materials if additional information, clarification or materials are needed to make a decision regarding license approval.

(b) A license is valid for the period of time stated on the license for the number of children specified and for the place of residence identified on the license.

The supervising agency’s licensing social worker submits the licensing application to the Licensing Authority. This “licensing application” is a required state form Foster Home Licensing Application ([DSS-5016](#)). The licensing social worker gathers all pertinent documents and submits them all at once. Upon receipt, the Licensing Authority staff reviews all licensure requests to ensure they contain all required forms and documents. Each form and document is reviewed to make sure all sections of the forms have been completed and required signatures have been obtained. If the application packet is incomplete, the Licensing Authority may follow-up with the supervising agency with an email or phone call, or it may return the application unprocessed. Once the application is declared complete, the review and approval process begins. This review and approval process may take 30 to 50 working days. Submitting complete, thorough, and easy-to-read applications expedites the licensing approval process. The beginning date of the license is the date the application is declared correct and complete.

Once an application has been approved, the Licensing Authority authorizes a license to be issued to the foster family. Two copies of the license are mailed to the supervising agency. The supervising agency retains one copy and provides the other to the foster family. The license

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states when the license begins, when it ends, and for what type and how many children the home may provide care.

B. [10A NCAC 70E .0702](#) RESPONSIBILITY

This rule reads:

Each supervising agency providing foster care services shall assess its applicants and licensees. Supervising agencies shall submit to the licensing authority information and reports that are used as the basis of either issuing or continuing to issue licenses.

The Licensing Authority must rely on the professional skills of the supervising agency staff as it reviews thousands of documents each year. The Licensing Authority also relies on each local licensing social worker to paint a picture of the foster family. The mutual home assessment and the social history are an opportunity to show the Licensing Authority the strengths and needs of the family by using descriptive rather than evaluative language. If the family has strong values, describe the values and the behaviors to reveal those values in action. If the home's backyard is child-friendly, describe the grassed areas with shade trees. Give the details of the swing set and the sand box. If the family has a pet, describe the pet. Describe how the pet responds to you as a stranger. The written application and accompanying documents are the only means for the Licensing Authority to know your families.

C. [10A NCAC 70E .0703](#) NEW LICENSES

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) The supervising agency shall submit all licensing materials to the licensing authority dated within 180 days prior to submitting an application for a new license. The supervising agency shall submit medical examinations of the members of the foster home to the licensing authority dated within 12 months prior to submitting an application for a new license.

The complete new licensure packet contains the following:

- Cover letter listing the contact information for the supervising agency licensing social worker
- Foster Care Facility Action Request ([DSS-5015](#))
- Foster Home License Application ([DSS-5016](#))
- Foster Home Fire Inspection Report ([DSS-1515](#))
- Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report ([DSS-5150](#))
- Medical History Form ([DSS-5017](#))

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- Medical Evaluation (with completed TB test results included) ([DSS-5156](#))
- Responsible Individual List (RIL) Information Request ([DSS-5268](#))
- Results of the Responsible Individuals List (RIL) for each applicant and household members age 18 and older
- Child abuse/neglect clearance letter(s) for each applicant and any adult household members who have resided in a state(s) other than North Carolina for the past five years
- Fingerprint clearance letters for each applicant and household members age 18 and older
- Letter of support from supervising agency director or designee if any applicant or adult household members age 18 and older have criminal convictions (if applicable)
- Letter of support from supervising agency director or designee if any applicant or adult household members 18 years of age and older have child protective services history as a perpetrator (if applicable)
- Copy of in-home day care license if applicant(s) operate an in-home day care
- Foster Home Request for Waiver (if applicable) ([DSS-5199](#))

A detailed description of each of these forms can be found in the Guide to Completing Foster Home Licensing Forms.

To be official, all information and required signatures must be current. For the DSS-5015, DSS-5016, DSS-1515, DSS-5150, DSS-5017, and DSS-5268 the information and signatures must be dated within 180 days of receipt of the packet by the Licensing Authority. The Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156), signed by a licensed medical provider, must be dated within 12 months of the receipt of the Medical Evaluation by the Licensing Authority. This includes the TB testing information listed on the form.

(b) The supervising agency shall submit all licensing application materials required for a license to the licensing authority at one time. The licensing authority shall return incomplete licensing applications to the supervising agency.

Submit all documents and material for a new license application at one time. The packet should contain all documents in one envelope with a cover letter on top. Do not staple the individual forms and documents. Arrange the documents in this order:

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- cover letter;
- DSS-5015;
- DSS-5016;
- DSS-1515;
- DSS-5150;
- DSS-5017;
- DSS-5156;
- TB Test Results;
- DSS-5268;
- child abuse/neglect clearance letter(s) if applicant(s) or any adult household member have resided in a state(s) other than North Carolina for the past five years;
- fingerprint clearance letters for each applicant and household members age 18 and older;
- letter of support from supervising agency director or designee if any applicant or adult household members have a criminal conviction;
- letter of support from supervising agency director if any applicant(s) or adult household members have a child protective service history as a perpetrator;
- copy of in-home day care license if applicants operate an in-home day care;
- and DSS-5199, if applicable.

The cover letter should include the name, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other contact information for the agency foster home licensing social worker. Include other contact persons as appropriate. Many supervising agencies assign one person to be a liaison between the agency and the Licensing Authority; that person oversees the licensing process and serves as agency contact when the Licensing Authority has questions.

(c) The licensing authority shall issue a new license, if approved according to the rules in this Section, effective the date the application and all required materials are received by the licensing authority.

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The license is effective the date the Licensing Authority determines that the application packet is complete and correct. The license is issued for 24 months beginning with the date the application packet is complete and correct. For example, an application packet is received on February 1, 2011 and there are errors and missing documents in the packet that are corrected on March 1, 2011. The foster home is licensed from March 1, 2011 to March 1, 2013.

Some agencies anticipate that their licensure packet will be approved upon initial submission to the Licensing Authority and place children with families pending licensure. This practice is prohibited and illegal and is grounds for the Licensing Authority to revoke or suspend the license of a child-placing agency. The only exception to placing a child in an unlicensed home is court ordered approval of a specific home for a specific child. Payment for the provision of foster care services can only be made to licensed foster homes.

Supervising agencies are required to keep the following licensing forms in the individual file of the foster home at the agency:

- Agency/Foster Parent Agreement
- Discipline Agreement
 - Notice Foster Home Mandatory Criminal History Check ([DSS-5280](#))
 - Local Court Record Check
 - Health Care Personnel Registry Check
 - NC Department of Corrections (Public Safety) Check
 - Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry Check
 - Reference Letters
- Copy of entire licensing packet

D. [10A NCAC 70E .0704](#) RELICENSURE AND RENEWAL

There are 9 subsections to this rule and they read:

(a) Materials for renewing a license are due to the licensing authority prior to the date the license expires.

(b) All relicensing materials shall be completed and dated within 180 days prior to the date the supervising agency submits materials for licensure to the licensing authority. Medical examinations of the members of the foster home shall be completed and dated within 12 months prior to submitting materials for re-licensure.

(c) All relicensing materials shall be submitted at one time to the licensing authority. Incomplete re-licensure applications shall be returned to the supervising agency.

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(d) *If materials are submitted after the foster home license expires, a license, if approved, shall be issued effective the date the licensing materials are received by the licensing authority.*

(e) *When a foster home license is terminated for failure to submit re-licensure materials, the licensing authority shall relicense the home if the re-licensure materials are submitted to the licensing authority within one year of the date the license was terminated and all requirements are met. After one year, the supervising agency shall submit a new licensure application to the licensing authority.*

(f) *When a foster home license has been terminated in good standing and the foster family wishes to be licensed again, the licensing authority shall renew the license if there are no changes or the changes meet the requirements of the Rules of this Section. The period of time for this renewed license is from the date the request is received by the licensing authority to the end date of the license period in effect when the license was terminated.*

(g) *Unless previously licensed foster parents who have not been licensed within the last 24 consecutive months demonstrate mastery of the parenting skills listed in [10A NCAC 70E .1117\(1\)](#) to the satisfaction of the supervising agency and documented to the licensing authority, the foster parents shall complete the 30 hours of pre-service training specified in [10A NCAC 70E .1117\(1\)](#).*

(h) *Unless previously licensed therapeutic foster parents who have not been licensed within the last 24 consecutive months demonstrate mastery of the therapeutic skills listed in [10A NCAC 70E .1117\(2\)](#) to the satisfaction of the supervising agency and documented to the licensing authority, the therapeutic foster parents shall complete the 10 hours of pre-service training specified in [10A NCAC 70E .1117\(2\)](#).*

(i) *The supervising agency shall provide documentation to the licensing authority that trainings for first aid, CPR, and universal precautions are updated.*

1. License Renewal

In order to continue providing foster care services, the foster home must be relicensed. To accomplish this, the supervising agency submits a re-licensure packet to the Licensing Authority. All required materials for re-licensure must be submitted at one time. To prevent a lapse in licensure, the Licensing Authority must review and accept the re-licensure packet before the current license expires. When the Licensing Authority approves the application, the home is relicensed beginning with the last day on the current license or the date the relicense packet was accepted, whichever is later.

- **The 180-Day Rule.**

All relicensing materials must be dated within 180 days of receipt of the relicensing packet by the Licensing Authority. There is only one exception to the 180-day rule. Medical Evaluations ([DSS-5156](#)) must be dated within 12 months of receipt of the relicensing packet by the Licensing Authority.

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- Timeframe.

Given the 24-month licensure period, the Licensing Authority is not able to be flexible about receiving re-licensure materials. The re-licensure packet is due prior to the date the license expires. Re-licensure packets should be sent to the Licensing Authority at least 60 days before the license expires. Incomplete and incorrect re-licensure packets may jeopardize the original licensing dates. If a relicense is due October 1, 2010 and a correct and complete relicense packet is received any time before October 1, 2010 then the relicense period is October 1, 2010 through October 1, 2012. If a relicense is due October 1, 2010 and the Licensing Authority receives a correct and complete relicensing packet on October 3, 2010, the new relicensing period is October 3, 2010 through October 3, 2012. If a relicense is due October 1, 2010 and the packet is incorrect and incomplete, the relicense date is the date the packet is finally correct. If an agency takes until October 15, 2010 to correct the relicense packet then the new relicensing period is October 15, 2010 through October 15, 2012.

2. Requirements

- In-Service Training:

To be relicensed, foster parents must complete at least 20 hours of in-service training. If this has not been done within the first 18 months of the licensure period, training becomes a high priority. It is the supervising agency's responsibility to provide foster parents with a list of resources to meet this training requirement. Once foster parents have met the re-licensure training requirement this must be documented on the Foster Home Relicense Application ([DSS-5157](#)) and on the Foster Care Facility Licensing Action Request Form ([DSS-5015](#)).

- Medical History:

All members of a foster family must complete the Medical History Form ([DSS-5017](#)) except for foster children. Changes in a family member's physical and/or mental health may alter their stamina and/or ability to provide care for some children; therefore, must be discussed with the family by the licensing social worker as these changes could have a negative or positive impact on the family. The DSS-5017 is the foster family's opportunity to report any such changes and to explain any item or comment on the [DSS-5156](#). It should be consistent with the DSS-5156.

- Physical Examination:

All members of a foster family must have a physical examination to be relicensed. Most families have medical insurance that provides for an annual physical for each person. Careful scheduling is needed to use this annual physical for relicensing, as many families are very busy. Many licensing social workers start reminding their foster families about this requirement six or seven months before the due date. At this annual physical, the Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156) must be completed. This form must be completed on all members of the foster home, except foster children. TB status does not have to be updated for re-licensure.

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- The Foster Home Fire Inspection Report ([DSS-1515](#))

This must be updated prior to re-licensure and requires the local fire inspector re-inspecting the foster home; an adult must be at home for the inspector to inspect the home. Often the licensing social worker helps the family get ready for this inspection by going through the house to make sure all requirements are met.

- The Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report ([DSS-5150](#))

This is also required for re-licensure. This requires the licensing social worker to inspect the home and make sure all requirements are met. With careful planning, this visit may coincide with the fire safety inspection.

NOTE: It is important to review the DSS-5017, DSS-5156, DSS-1515 and DSS-5150 to make sure all areas are addressed, explained, signed and dated. A mistake or omission by the fire inspector, medical provider or foster parent, or others could cause a delay in processing the DSS-5157. This may mean the foster home is un-licensed until all current and correct information is received by the Licensing Authority.

- Criminal Records Check

The supervising agency must update all criminal records checks except fingerprints as part of re-licensure. This means checking and recording the status on the following lists:

- Local Courts Records Check
- NC Department of Corrections (Public Safety) Offender Information Sex Offender and Public Registry
- NC Health Care Personnel Registry

- Summary of Experiences

In addition, at relicensure the licensing social worker must provide a written summary of the foster parent's experience during the last two years. This summary should include examples of how the foster parents used the twelve parenting skills.

- Agency/Foster Parents' Agreement ([DSS-1796](#)) and the Discipline Agreement.

At relicensure the family and the agency must also renew the Agency/Foster Parents' Agreement (DSS-1796) and the Discipline Agreement. These documents should be kept in the supervising agency files and are not sent to the Licensing Authority.

3. Relicensure Packet

Once these tasks are completed, the relicensure application packet is assembled and mailed to the Licensing Authority. The Relicensure Packet, at a minimum, consists of the following:

- Cover letter
- DSS-5015: Foster Care Facility License Action Request
- DSS-5157: Foster Home Relicense Application
- DSS-1515: Foster Home Fire Inspection Report
- DSS-5150: Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report • DSS-5017: Medical History Form

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- DSS-5156: Medical Evaluation (TB test results not needed)

4. Steps in the relicensure process:

1. Send reminder notification to the family and documents that they will need to complete: Foster Home Fire Inspection Report (DSS-1515), Medical History Form (DSS-5017), and Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156). Also remind them about completing their training requirements.
2. Place reminder phone calls to family six months before the end of the license period to be sure they are meeting their training requirement and have made necessary fire inspection and medical appointments to complete forms.
3. Schedule visits with family.
4. Complete updated summary of mutual home assessment. This should include a brief summary of their two years of fostering, any changes in the household or sleeping arrangements, an update of family's strengths and needs and what is being done to meet their needs, a list of quarterly visits, and a recommendation for continued licensure.
5. Conduct new criminal background checks on all adults in the home.
6. Visit the family to complete and collect forms, verify that 20 hours of training have been completed, and share the updated summary. Verify that other required training, such as CPR and first aid, are current.
7. Verify that all required training for therapeutic status has been completed by the required training providers.
8. Ensure pets have current vaccinations (if applicable).
9. Mail necessary documents to the Licensing Authority.
10. Keep remaining documents on file in your agency (see list below).

5. Relicensure documents to be kept in the foster home file.

Most of the documents created during the relicensure process stay in your agency. Please remember that your agency is subject to monitoring and audits to ensure that your process and recordkeeping comply with North Carolina's licensing rules.

Relicensing documents that supervising agencies should maintain in the foster home file include:

- A copy of all items sent to the Licensing Authority
- Reminder letter to foster parents

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- ○ Agency/Foster Parents' Agreement (DSS-1796)
- ○ Summary of the past two years of licensure

- Copy of all criminal record check results
- ○ Discipline Agreement
- ○ Log and evidence of all required training

NOTE: Illegal Placements - If there are children in a home but the Licensing Authority has not received the relicensing paperwork by the 24-month deadline, the license is terminated and the placement becomes illegal. When this happens, the custodians of the child become legally liable for the child's safety and well-being. Licensing social workers and their supervisors may also be held personally liable, which means that their personal assets (house, car, savings, etc.) could be at risk. Foster care payments to the agency are terminated. To avoid this liability, supervising agencies usually take one of the following actions:

- **Move the child to a licensed placement. Although this solution eliminates the legal vulnerability, it risks inflicting further trauma on a child, especially if the existing placement is stable and there is a bond between the child and his or her foster parents, or**

- **Ask a court to make this (currently) unlicensed placement the court ordered placement for the child. Although this solution eliminates legal vulnerability, it also means that in most cases federal and state funds cannot be used to pay for the care of the child.**

All this underscores the importance of submitting relicensing materials in a timely fashion. When a foster home license is terminated for failure to submit relicensure materials, the home may be relicensed if the materials are submitted to the Licensing Authority within one year of the date the license was terminated. If approved, the new license will be issued effective the date the licensing materials are received by the Licensing Authority.

After one year, the foster family will have to submit a new licensure application to be considered for relicensure. Previously licensed foster parents who have not been licensed within the last 24 consecutive months must demonstrate to the supervising agency that they have continued mastery of the 12 skills. The supervising agency, in turn, must document this fact for the Licensing Authority. If the previously licensed foster parents cannot demonstrate mastery of all 12 skills, they must retake the 30 hours of pre-service training. Previously licensed therapeutic foster parents must also demonstrate continued mastery of the therapeutic skills or retake the 10-hour therapeutic pre-service training. The supervising agency must also provide documentation to the Licensing Authority that trainings for first aid, CPR, and universal precautions are updated.

E. [10A NCAC 70E .0705](#) CHANGE IN FACTUAL INFORMATION ON THE LICENSE

The 3 subsections of this rule read:

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(a) *A license may be changed during the time it is in effect if the change is in compliance with licensing standards.*

(b) *The supervising agency shall submit supportive data to the licensing authority for the following:*

- (1) *Changes in age range, number of children, and sex; or*
- (2) *Change in residence*

(c) *A foster home license may not be changed to a residential child-care facility license. The foster home license shall be terminated and materials shall be submitted in accordance with [10A NCAC 70I](#) or [10A NCAC 70J](#) in order to be licensed as a residential child-care facility.*

1. Licensure Changes

During the two-year licensing period, all families experience change. Some are so significant that supervising agencies must inform the Licensing Authority about them so that the license can be modified to reflect the change. Changes of this nature include:

- Removing a foster parent or family household member
- Adding a family household member
- Change in residence (i.e., the family moves)
- Change from family foster care to therapeutic foster care
- Change from therapeutic foster care to family foster care
- Change in age range and gender of children for placement
- Change in capacity

In the case of the above changes, as long as the change complies with minimum licensing standards, the license may be changed during the time it is in effect. One change that cannot be made under the same license is the move from a foster home license to a residential child-care facility license. To make this switch, the foster home license must be terminated and a new application made to become a licensed residential child-care facility.

2. Change Process

To process a change the licensing social worker completes the Foster Home Change Request Application ([DSS-5159](#)).

The complete change packet contains the following:

- Cover letter listing the contact information for the supervising agency licensing social worker

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- DSS-5015: Foster Care Facility Licensing Action Request Form
- DSS-5159: Foster Home Change Request Application
- Other forms and documents depending on the type of change (See Guide to Completing Foster Home Licensing Forms)

Here are some things to remember when making changes:

- Timeframe - changes should be submitted within 60 days of the change. The change will be approved the date the Licensing Authority received the request or when complete and accurate information has been obtained;
- Documentation - fill in all required information and date all documents;
- The only signature required for changes is the licensing social worker;
- DO NOT FAX any documents without prior approval from the Licensing Authority.

3. Retroactive License Changes.

The Licensing Authority may approve retroactive changes for emergency placements. The supervising agency needs to contact the Licensing Authority to receive verbal approval for the change and then within five working days submit a change request by mail.

4. Adding a foster parent to a license.

If someone is added as a licensed foster parent, do not use a change packet. Instead, the Foster Home License Application ([DSS-5016](#)) and all required forms for initial licensure must be submitted to the Licensing Authority. Adding a parent to the license changes the household status and the current license is no longer valid. This situation often applies when a licensed foster parent marries or develops a relationship with a significant other.

Supervising agencies should provide instructions from the beginning of licensure to their single foster parent applicants about the importance of informing the supervising agency if their marital status changes or if they become involved in a significant relationship. The spouse or significant other will need to complete all licensure requirements and the supervising agency must submit a new Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016) adding the spouse as a licensed foster parent. If the foster parent develops a relationship that results in the significant other becoming a frequent visitor or spending the night in the foster parent's home, the significant other needs to complete all licensure requirements. The supervising agency must submit a new Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016) adding the significant other as a licensed foster parent.

F. [10A NCAC 70E .0706](#) FOSTER HOME TRANSFER PROCEDURES

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The two subsections of this rule read:

(a) A foster home licensed and in good standing with the licensing authority may transfer from the supervision of a county department of social services or a private child-placing agency to the supervision of another county department of social services or private child-placing agency upon request. Procedures for transferring licenses include:

- (1) The current supervising agency providing copies of the most recent mutual home assessment, training, and licensing documents to the receiving supervising agency;*
- (2) The current supervising agency notifying the custodian(s) of the foster children placed in the home of the transfer;*
- (3) the receiving supervising agency notifying the custodian(s) of the foster children placed in the home of the transfer;*
- (4) a Foster Care Facility License Action Request Form from the previous supervising agency that is marked terminated shall be submitted to the licensing authority;*
- (5) a Foster Care Facility License Action Request Form from the receiving supervising agency that is marked new license shall be submitted to the licensing authority;*
- (6) a cover letter from the previous supervising agency stating they are aware of the transfer shall be submitted to the licensing authority;*
- (7) a cover letter from the receiving supervising agency requesting transfer shall be submitted to the licensing authority; and*
- (8) a mutual home assessment written by the receiving supervising agency shall be submitted to the licensing authority.*

(b) The materials in paragraph (a) of this rule shall be submitted to the licensing authority within 90 days after the foster parents request to transfer to another supervising agency.

1. “Transfer”

Occasionally foster parents request to be supervised and supported by a supervising agency other than their current one. This request is called a transfer. Technically, the term “transfer” is only partially correct. When a foster family transfers from one supervising agency to another, their current license is terminated and they are reinstated with the new agency, receiving a new facility identification number. A transfer should enhance professional relationships. One of the most powerful keys to a successful placement is a good working relationship between foster parents and supervising agency. Keep the goal of providing consistency and support for the children in mind as you process a transfer.

The transfer process should be open and transparent. All three parties (foster parent, current agency licensing social worker, and receiving agency licensing social worker) should engage in open and effective communication and be involved in all steps of a transfer. Ideally, the current agency licensing social worker initiates a transfer when it seems another agency may be better suited for a particular foster home. At times, dissatisfied foster parents often approach other agencies. When this happens, the receiving agency licensing social worker should immediately contact the foster parent’s current licensing social worker to discuss how to proceed. It is beneficial for each agency to maintain and nurture a productive working relationship. Working together on an individual transfer strengthens that relationship and increases each agency’s ability to serve children in the future. Once all

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three parties are in communication, the transfer procedure is straightforward. Agencies need to have an understanding and agree when the transfer is to take place, to allow a seamless transition for the foster family and continued services for any child in the home.

Good communication between the current supervising agency and the receiving supervising agency is essential when foster children are in the home. The impact and ramifications on the foster children regarding the transfer of the foster home to another supervising agency must be carefully evaluated. The parents, guardians or custodians of the children must be notified and agree to the transfer. A Child and Family Team meeting for each foster child in the home must be held. The Child and Family Team must assess the service needs of the children and make a determination that the same level of service will be provided by the receiving supervising agency.

Once the current agency licensing social worker and foster parents have talked with the receiving agency and that agency has expressed a desire to supervise the foster parents, the receiving agency must submit the transfer packet to the Licensing Authority within 90 days of the foster parent's request.

2. The transfer process involves the following steps:

- Foster parents sign a release form indicating their desire to transfer to another agency. Foster parents should discuss with their current agency the reasons they wish to transfer. (Sample release form is provided in The Guide to Completing Foster Home Licensing Forms)
- The current and receiving agency must have a joint conference with the parents, guardians or custodians of any foster children in the home to discuss the transfer and obtain their agreement for the transfer of the foster child/children to a new supervising agency.
- A Child and Family Team Meeting for each foster child in the home must be held. The Child and Family Team must assess the service needs of the children and make a determination that the same level of service will be provided by the receiving supervising agency and agree to the transfer of the foster child/children to a new supervising agency. The current agency, receiving agency and foster parents should attend this meeting.
- The current agency provides the following to the receiving agency:
 - Most recent mutual home assessment
 - Documentation of training
 - Other licensure forms (e.g., fire inspection, environmental checklist, medical history, medical evaluation, TB test records, etc.)
 - A Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015) turnaround (preprinted by the state) marked "terminate" in ink
- The receiving agency must complete the following:

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- A cover letter.
- A new Foster Care Facility Action Request (DSS-5015) with current information.
- Foster Home Transfer Request Application (DSS-5158).
- A brief mutual home assessment demonstrating the agency is familiar with the family and aware of their skills and abilities. This update builds on the mutual home assessment completed by the current agency. The method of a mutual home assessment for transfer is the same as the initial assessment for licensure. At least one home visit must be documented and separate interviews are required for each spouse or co-parent in the household. A joint interview is required for co-parents and all members of the household.
- The narrative description of the assessment of the family should be comprehensive enough to show that the worker in the receiving agency is familiar with the family and is aware of their skills and abilities. This brief mutual home assessment should build on and not repeat the information completed by the previous agency/agencies. This description should include the families experience fostering and what they have learned from this. This documentation should include the reasons for the transfer, the benefits this family will bring to the new agency and what their expectations are of the new agency. Dates of the home visits, office visit or face to face contacts in other locations should be included.
- If applicable, a Foster Home Relicense Application and packet.
- If applicable, a Foster Home Change Request Application and packet if there have been any changes in the foster homes (the family has moved, change in household membership, etc.)

If the parents, guardians or custodians or child and family team do not agree to the transfer, the foster child can be placed in another foster home supervised by the current child-placing agency and the foster home (with no foster children) can be transferred to the receiving child-placing agency.

Some key points to remember when transferring a license:

- The new supervising agency should gather required information and send it in as one single packet.
- If requesting that a family foster home become therapeutic, include documentation that all caregivers have received the additional training required to provide therapeutic services.
- If the licensure period ends the same month as the transfer, a relicensure packet must also be completed.

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- The current agency is responsible for providing services to the foster children, their families and foster parents until the Licensing Authority approves the transfer.
- The current agency is responsible for payments to the foster parents until the Licensing Authority approves the transfer.
- No additional foster children shall be placed in the home until the transfer is approved.
- The executive directors of the current and receiving supervising agencies must sign the Foster Home Transfer Request Application (DSS-5158). The foster parents and the receiving agency licensing social worker must also sign this document.

To process a transfer the licensing social worker from the receiving agency completes the Foster Home Transfer Request Application ([DSS-5158](#)).

A complete transfer packet contains the following and is submitted by the receiving agency to the Licensing Authority:

- Cover letter
- DSS-5015: Foster Care Facility License Action Request from the current agency
- DSS-5015: Foster Care Facility License Action Request from the receiving agency
- DSS-5158: Foster Home Transfer Request Application
- A Brief Mutual Home Assessment by the receiving agency

If all the paperwork is complete, the transfer request received by the last day of the month will usually be effective the 1st day of the next month. For example, a complete transfer packet is received May 11; the license will terminate from the previous agency on May 31 and be effective with the new agency June 1.

3. Recruiting Foster Homes from Other Child-Placing Agencies

Recruiting foster homes under the supervision of another agency is an unethical professional practice; it undermines the overall mission of child welfare and is not supported by the Licensing Authority. It is not illegal, but it does negatively impact the practice and reputation of the agency ‘stealing’ the foster parent. Often this occurs under the guise of employees terminating employment from one agency and then working for another agency and insisting that foster parents want to transfer due to the previous relationship with the employee. In many instances, employees have actively recruited foster parents from their previous agency or have encouraged foster parents to actively recruit other foster parents from their previous agency.

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The Licensing Authority strongly suggests that supervising agencies develop a policy that they will not accept foster parent transfers from the employee's previous agency for at least twelve months after the employee begins employment with the new agency and that a non-competing clause be added to their employment applications that clearly forbids the recruitment of foster parents from the employee's prior supervising agency.

It is difficult to maintain professional working relationships with other agencies that are actively recruiting foster homes that you have trained and developed. The natural reaction is to limit contact with such agencies to protect your foster families; however, doing this often promotes a climate of suspicion, acrimony and distrust.

G. 10A NCAC 70E .0707 TERMINATION

The two subsections of this rule read:

(a) Licenses terminate at the end of the two-year license period unless all relicensing materials have been received by the licensing authority prior to the license expiration date.

(b) The licensing authority shall terminate a license before the end of the two-year license period if requested by the foster parents.

Foster home licenses are issued for a two-year period. If the Licensing Authority has not received all the relicensing materials by the end of that time, the license will automatically terminate. In other words, the license terminates if it is not renewed. The granting of a foster home license is a privilege; no one has a right to be a foster parent. The Licensing Authority licenses or relicenses a foster home, based on the recommendation of a supervising agency. It is the prerogative of the supervising agency whether to recommend a home for licensure.

1. Mutually agreed upon terminations.

Terminations can also be requested from the Licensing Authority when the supervising agency and the foster family mutually agrees it will be in everyone's best interest.

Terminations generally take place in one of three ways:

1. The termination request may be a mutual decision between the foster parents and supervising agency. There are various reasons the decision to terminate a license may be reached: a family may not be able to continue fostering due to other life obligations; they may no longer desire to foster; or may have adopted a child. In these types of circumstances, it is good to come to a mutual agreement to end the licensure relationship and submit a termination packet that documents the reason for termination. Submitting a termination packet also provides an opportunity to document any concerns noted while the family was licensed.

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2. Sometimes the supervising agency may have extreme difficulty contacting the foster family, giving the agency strong, indirect evidence that the family no longer wishes to foster. Examples of convincing, indirect evidence of a family's disinterest in continuing to foster include moving without telling the agency and ignoring the agency's repeated efforts to contact them. In these cases, it is best practice to send a certified letter to the family documenting your attempts to contact them and informing them that if they do not reply by a specific date your agency will assume they wish to have their license terminated. Foster parent signatures are not required in this instance.

3. In other instances, the foster home may be in good standing with the agency, but the relicensing paperwork is not submitted to the Licensing Authority on time. This should never happen if the licensing social worker keeps good track of when to begin the relicensing process for each family. If children are placed in the home at the time the license expires, the placement becomes illegal. As you get to know your families, you can adjust timelines based on how quickly they respond to your requests.

2. Lapse or failure to relicense

If a license terminates or lapses due to failure to relicense, the home can be relicensed if the paperwork is submitted to the Licensing Authority within a year of termination. The renewed license period will begin the date the relicensure packet is complete and the licensure period will be 24 months. For example, if a family's original license period is from January 2005 through January 2007 but the supervising agency fails to submit a completed relicensure packet by January 2007, the license automatically terminates. If a complete relicensure packet is submitted in May 2007, the family's new license period will be from May 2007 through May 2009.

If the license has been terminated for more than a year, a new application must be submitted. If the foster parents have not been licensed for two years, they will also have to demonstrate continued mastery of the 12 parenting skills to the supervising agency, or they need to retake the 30-hour pre-service training. Therapeutic foster parents also have to demonstrate continued mastery of therapeutic skills to the supervising agency or retake the 10 additional hours of pre-service training. (See the section on the Mutual Home Assessment .0800 for ideas about how families might demonstrate parenting skills.)

3. Agency Reluctance

Sometimes a license lapses due to the supervising agency's reluctance to use a foster home. In some instances, an agency may choose not to place children with a foster family due to concern about the family's ability to provide foster care. Child placement is a privilege, something that is done at the discretion of the supervising agencies and based on their understanding of the child's best interests.

However, simply allowing licenses to lapse due to unaddressed or unresolved foster parent need is unethical and poor practice. It is not fair to foster parents, who have devoted their

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time and resources in the hopes of caring for a child, only to be continually passed over without explanation. The “lapsing” path to termination can also be dangerous to children—if agencies shirk their responsibility to follow up on legitimate concerns, unsuitable families may move on to become licensed with another agency, thereby putting children at risk.

If the licensing social worker has concerns about a foster family, he or she should discuss them with the family in an open, respectful way. If licensing social workers need help with this, they should speak with their supervisors and colleagues. These are some of the most difficult conversations to have with families, but they are also crucial to maintaining safe foster homes for children. There may be times when additional training or support can address your concerns. If not, families deserve to know that your concerns are preventing you from placing a child in their home. In some cases, the family may transfer their license and go on to have a productive relationship with another agency. In other cases, the family may be unsuitable as foster parents.

4. Processing a termination.

To process a termination the licensing social worker completes the Foster Home Termination Application ([DSS-5160](#)).

The complete change packet contains the following:

- Cover letter
- DSS-5015: Foster Care Facility Licensing Action Request Form
- DSS-5160: Foster Home Termination Application

H. [10A NCAC 70E .0708](#) REVOCATION AND DENIALS

The eight subsections are explained below:

(a) The licensing authority may revoke or deny licenses when an agency authorized by law to investigate allegations of abuse or neglect finds the foster parent has abused or neglected a child.

(b) The licensing authority may revoke or deny a license when the foster home is not in compliance with licensing standards in this Subchapter.

(c) The licensing authority shall base the revocation or denial on the following:

- (1) A child's circumstances;*
- (2) A child's permanency plan;*
- (3) The nature of the non-compliance; and (4) The circumstances of the placement.*

The Licensing Authority is the only entity that has the authority to revoke or deny a license. The decision to revoke or deny a license is made by the foster home licensing consultants, Regulatory and Licensing Services team leader, the Child Welfare Services Section Chief and a child welfare attorney. Supervising agencies may request and recommend revocation to the

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Licensing Authority by submitting form [DSS-5279](#). When completing this form, provide as much detail as possible regarding the infraction(s) supporting the revocation request.

1. Reasons for revocations.

The most common reasons for revocations are:

- the foster parent or a household member is found by child protective services to have abused or neglected a child and the CPS Judicial Review process has been resolved;
- the foster parent has used or allowed corporal punishment;
- criminal behavior of the foster parent or a household member;
- the applicants or household members are listed in the Provider Penalty Tracking Database (<https://providertracking.dhhs.state.nc.us/>); or
- The foster home is not in compliance with licensing rules, which may jeopardize the safety of a foster child.

When the infraction is a violation of a licensing rule, cite the rule, the date(s) of the violation(s), and the specifics of how each rule was violated. If abuse or neglect has been substantiated provide as much information that is available to you from child protective services or others.

It is important to work collaboratively within your agency and with the Licensing Authority to determine when revocation is necessary. Even though it can be difficult, revocation is safer for children than merely allowing a foster home license to expire or opting not to place children in the home.

2. Reasons for denial.

The most common reasons for denying a foster parent application are:

- the foster parent or a household member is found by child protective services to have abused or neglected a child and the CPS Judicial Review process has been resolved;
- criminal behavior of the foster parent or a household member;
- the applicants or household members are listed in the Provider Penalty Tracking Database (<https://providertracking.dhhs.state.nc.us/>); or
- Non-compliance with rule and policy requirements.

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(d) Foster parents shall be notified in writing of the reasons for the licensing authority's decision to revoke or deny a license. When a license has been revoked, foster parents shall submit their license to the supervising agency so it can be returned to the licensing authority.

The Licensing Authority will send a certified letter to the foster parents informing them of the reasons for the revocation along with their appeal rights and a copy to the supervising agency. The revocation becomes effective 60 days after the mailing of the notice unless the foster parents appeal the decision. If the foster parents appeal the decision the revocation is not effective until a final decision is made by the administrative law judge hearing the case. After the revocation is finalized the supervising agency should obtain the foster home license from the foster parents and return it to the Licensing Authority.

This rule continues to read:

(e) The licensing authority may revoke or deny licensure to an applicant who has a finding that will place the applicant on the following:

- (1) Health Care Personnel Registry pursuant to G.S. 131E-256; or*
- (2) North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry pursuant to Article 27A Part 2 of G.S. 14.*

(f) The licensing authority may also deny licensure to an applicant under any of the following circumstances:

- (1) the applicant was the owner of a licensable facility or agency pursuant to Chapter 122C, Chapter 131D, or Article 7 of Chapter 110 of the General Statutes, and that a facility or agency had its license revoked;*
- (2) the applicant is the owner of a licensable facility or agency and that facility or agency incurred a penalty for a Type A or B violation under G.S. 122C, Article 3;*
- (3) the applicant is the owner of licensable facility or agency that had its license summarily suspended or downgraded to provisional status as a result of violations under G.S. 122C-24.1(a), or G.S. 131D, Article 1A, or had its license summarily suspended or denied under G.S. 110, Article 7;*
- (4) the applicant was the owner of a licensable facility or agency pursuant to G.S. 122C, G.S. 131D, or G.S. 110, Article 7, who voluntarily relinquished that facility or agency's license after the initiation of revocation or summary suspension proceedings, or there is a pending appeal of a denial, revocation, or summary suspension of that facility or agency's license; or*
- (5) the applicant has as any part of its governing body or management an owner who previously held a license that was revoked or summarily suspended pursuant to G.S. 122C, G.S. 131D, or G.S. 110, Article 7.*

(g) The denial of licensure pursuant to Paragraph (f) of this Rule shall be in accordance with [G.S. 122C-23\(e1\)](#) and [G.S. 131D-10.3\(h\)](#).

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Senate Bill 926 prevents the above individuals from becoming licensed as foster parents for a period of 60 months if any of the above administrative actions have been taken.

These individuals will be listed in the Provider Penalty Tracking Database (<https://providertracking.dhhs.state.nc.us/>). If an applicant's name appears in this database they are not eligible to become licensed as foster parents.

(h) Appeal procedures specified in 10A NCAC 70L .0301 are applicable for persons seeking an appeal to the licensing authority's decision to revoke or deny a license. If the action is reversed on appeal, the application shall be approved back to the date of the denied application if all qualifications are met.

When a foster home license is denied or revoked, foster parents have the right to appeal through the Office of Administrative Hearings. Appeal procedures are specified in 10A NCAC 70L.0301. If the Licensing Authority's action is reversed on appeal, the license is approved back to the date of the denied application or the date of revocation if all qualifications are met.

When an appeal occurs, the supervising agency social workers are usually asked to appear in court as primary witnesses. The fact that you may be asked to stand by your records in court underscores the importance of comprehensive and consistent documentation.

I. 10A NCAC 70E .0709 KINDS OF LICENSES The two subsections of this rule read:

(a) Full License. A full license shall be issued for no more than two years when all licensing requirements are met.

(b) Provisional License.

(1) A provisional license shall be issued for no more than six months while some below standard component is being corrected.

(2) A provisional license for the same below standard program component shall not be renewed.

The Licensing Authority rarely grants a provisional license. When a provisional license is granted, it usually is to give an applicant the opportunity to correct a situation preventing full licensure. For example, a relative may be granted provisional licensure to make renovations necessary to care for a relative child who is in the custody of a county department of social services. Provisional licenses are time limited for six months and may not be renewed. If the situation that caused a provisional license to be issued is not remedied, then family is no longer licensed and cannot provide foster care.

The supervising agency's licensing social worker should consult the Licensing Authority before requesting a provisional license.

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J. [10A NCAC 70E .0710](#) OUT-OF-STATE FACILITIES AND FOSTER HOMES

This rule reads:

The use of out-of-state residential child-care facilities and foster homes for the placement of children in the custody of a North Carolina county department of social services shall be in accordance with the following:

- (1) Prior to placement into an out-of-state foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home or any other residential child-care facility, the county department of social services placing the child in the out-of-state facility shall determine that the foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home, or any other residential child-care facility is licensed according to the standards of that state.*
- (2) The county department of social services shall monitor the licensing and relicensing of the out-of-state foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home or any other residential child-care facility to ensure that no child for whom they have responsibility is in an unlicensed foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home or any other residential child-care facility.*
- (3) The county department of social services shall submit to the licensing authority written documentation that an out-of-state foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home or any other residential child-care facility has been licensed and that an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Form for the child to be placed out of state has been signed by both states in order for the foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home or any other residential child-care facility to be issued a license identification number for foster care reimbursement purposes.*

This rule pertains to county departments of social services (DSS). Before a child in custody of a county DSS is placed in a foster home, group home, child-caring institution, maternity home or any other residential child-care facility in another state, the county DSS must verify that the facility is licensed in the other state. For children placed in foster homes in other states, the county DSS must obtain a copy of the other state's foster home license, copies of fingerprint clearance letters and results of checks of child abuse and/or neglect registries. For children placed in group homes, child-caring institutions, maternity homes or any other residential child-care facility the county DSS must obtain a copy of the facility license and documentation that the facility has met child safety standards related to caretakers and direct care staff employed by the facility. The social worker must ensure that the out-of-state placement complies with the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC): this is completed with [DSS-1837/ICPC 100A](#). Policy regarding ICPC can be found on the [NC Child Welfare Manual page](#). See the following link for a summary of the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children: <http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/CPrograms/Improvement/Documents/ICPCsummary.pdf>

Once the county DSS has evidence that the out-of-state placement is officially licensed and the [DSS-1837/ICPC 100A](#) has been filed, the social worker will send an out-of-state placement packet to the Licensing Authority and the Licensing Authority issues a license identification number so that federal and state funds may be used to support the care of the child placed out of state.

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IV. SECTION .0800 | MUTUAL HOME ASSESSMENT

A. [10A NCAC 70E .0801](#) PURPOSE

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) The supervising agency shall conduct a mutual home assessment study of the foster home to determine if the home meets the requirements for licensure and is suitable for family foster care of children needing family foster care services or therapeutic foster care of children needing therapeutic foster care services.

(b) The supervising agency shall provide information to applicants that will make it possible for the applicants to make a knowledgeable decision about their interest in pursuing licensure. The supervising agency shall learn enough about the applicants to determine whether the applicants can meet the needs of children and care for children in accordance with licensing requirements. The supervising agency shall also learn enough about the applicants to determine the kind of child they can best serve.

The mutual home assessment is the key document in the foster home licensing process. The Licensing Authority relies on this document to determine whether to license an applicant. The twelve parenting skills detailed in rule [10A NCAC 70E .1104\(a\)](#) are central to a comprehensive mutual assessment. The licensing social worker's mastery of these skills makes the mutual assessment a natural and beneficial part of the licensing process. Done well, the mutual home assessment enhances the foster parent/social worker relationship, which in turn increases the chance that children in foster care will have a caring and nurturing placement experience. The mutual home assessment is documented in the Foster Home License Application ([DSS-5016](#)).

The purpose of the mutual home assessment is to:

- Determine whether the home meets requirements
- Assure applicants make an informed decision
- Identify skills/areas for continued development by foster parents. It is unlikely that new foster parents will be proficient in all 12 skills instantly. Areas for development (needs) will emerge during a mutual home assessment that will have to be addressed and prioritized by the foster family and the agency
- Learn enough about the family to make effective placement decisions.

There are five parts to a Mutual Home Assessment:

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- Part 1. Family History on each applicant
- Part 2. Assessment of the twelve skills of foster parenting
- Part 3. Assessment of the home for space to accommodate each child
- Part 4. Assessment of the applicant's ability to participate in shared parenting
- Part 5. Assessment regarding the applicant's financial ability to provide foster care

Keep these five parts in mind as you and the foster parent applicant go through the licensing process. The ultimate goal of the assessment is to determine the applicant's ability to care for children.

Many workers rely on the mutual home assessment document. The Licensing Authority uses it to decide whether an applicant can provide a safe and nurturing home for a child in care. The applicant family uses it to strengthen their understanding of the skills needed to care for children. Social workers placing children use it to decide whether a specific home can meet the needs of a specific child.

Take time to write this document so it is useful to these various readers. Use direct descriptive language. Do not use cognitive and affective terms (e.g., understands, appreciates, feels, supports, etc.) unless you provide evidence to support these judgments. Describe applicants by describing their behaviors. If an applicant has a skill, explain how you know that. Help the Licensing Authority understand why you have decided to recommend the family for licensure.

When an application for licensure is incomplete, the Licensing Authority returns the entire packet to the supervising agency for completion. One of the more common reasons for returning a packet is incomplete mutual home assessment information. If an applicant was married previously, there is a gap in employment, or there is something else that seems to call for explanation, the Licensing Authority expects to find a comment about it. The narrative should leave no doubt about the appropriateness of your recommendation for licensure.

B. [10A NCAC 70E .0802](#) METHOD OF MUTUAL HOME ASSESSMENT

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) The mutual home assessment shall be carried out in a series of planned discussions between the licensing worker of the supervising agency, the prospective foster parent applicants and other members of the household. The family shall be seen by the licensing social worker in the family's home and in the supervising agency's office.

(b) In an application involving a single applicant, there shall be two separate face-to-face interviews occurring on two different dates. In an application involving joint

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applicants, there shall be a separate face-to-face interview with each applicant and an additional two face-to-face interviews with both applicants. The two face-to-face interviews shall occur on two different dates. There shall be separate face-to-face interviews with each member of the household 10 years of age or older. Training and group sessions do not count as face-to-face interviews. The assessment process shall be a joint effort of the supervising agency and the applicants to determine the applicants' suitability for providing foster care and the kind of child the applicants can best parent.

1. Visits with the family

The professional relationship between the licensing social worker and the foster family is a key factor in the successful recruitment and licensing of foster families. The best way for a licensing social worker to assess a family's ability to provide foster care and meet the needs of the agency and the children the agency serves is through individual and group interviews with the applicants and members of the household. The applicants have to be seen by the licensing social worker in the family's home and in the supervising agency's office. Different and important issues and impressions arise when a family is seen in the comfort of their own home versus in an office setting. You need enough information to make a decision about whether you can vouch for the family as a safe and appropriate home for children in foster care.

For single applicants the face-to-face interview in the home of the applicant and the face-to-face interview in the agency's office on separate dates meet the requirements of the rule. For two-parent homes, two separate face-to-face interviews with each applicant on different dates as well as two face-to-face joint discussions with both parents have to be arranged. The joint discussions with both parents can occur on the same dates as the separate face-to-face discussions with each parent. For example, the licensing social worker may meet separately with one parent at 1:00 PM, separately with another parent at 2:00 PM and then meet jointly with both parents at 3:00 PM. Separate face-to-face interviews with each member of the household 10 years of age and older must be held. Licensing social workers can use their professional judgment in deciding when and where interviews will take place with other members of the household. The licensing social worker needs to discuss with the children in the home their feelings about sharing their parents with other children, sharing their bedroom (if applicable), and sharing toys.

2. Extended Family

Extended family and friends need to understand what it means to care for a foster child. Extended family members and close family friends will serve as surrogate grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. to the foster children. Applicants need to have discussions with other family members and friends about their desire to become foster parents. It is important to understand how all family members will be affected by, and how they might affect, children being placed in the home.

3. Boyfriends and Girlfriends

Boyfriends and girlfriends of single applicants must also be part of the assessment process. Live-in boyfriends and girlfriends are considered foster parent applicants and must meet all licensing requirements. Boyfriends and girlfriends of applicants who visit the home of the

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applicant and have contact with foster children are considered members of the household and must be listed on the Foster Home Licensing Application ([DSS-5016](#)) and evaluated as a household member.

The licensing social worker will need to document on Part V of the DSS-5016 the type of visits (face-to-face, joint) where the visits occurred, and who was present. Do not include training contacts, group sessions, phone contacts, etc.

C. [10 A NCAC 70E .0803](#) ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) The supervising agency shall advise the applicants at the first contact with the agency of the North Carolina licensing requirements for foster care. The supervising agency shall make a decision whether to continue a mutual home assessment.

The assessment process should begin the moment someone expresses interest in becoming a foster parent. During this first contact the agency gives information about the licensure process and the foster children the agency serves and their needs. If the applicant's motivation does not meet the agency's needs, inform the applicant that the agency does not wish to continue. For example, the applicant may wish to foster only one child of a specific gender, ethnic/racial background, and parentage. If there is little likelihood of such a child coming into care, the agency should inform the individual and decline to pursue licensure.

Foster home licensure is a privilege, not a right. Child-placing agencies have no obligation to license a home that does not meet the needs of the agency and the children in care.

(b) The supervising agency shall inform the applicants about the services, policies, procedures, standards, and expectations of the agency regarding the provision of foster care services. The applicants shall weigh the responsibilities entailed in providing foster care services and make a decision whether to continue a mutual home assessment.

Inform applicants as soon as possible how the licensure process works. Minimally provide the applicant with the following information:

- Services from your agency for foster parents
- Agency policies for foster parents including:
- Rate of reimbursement
- Criminal records checks, including fingerprinting
- Medical examination and physician's statement of ability
- Fire safety inspections
- Home visits
- Training requirements, including pre-service and in-service requirements
- Client rights
- Agency discipline policy

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- Procedures for licensure, child placement, and record keeping
- The approximate length of time to become licensed
- Agency expectations of applicants and foster parents.

This is a good time to let applicants know that the process is time consuming, lengthy, and will change their life style. Letting applicants know that the agency will be investing time and money in their training will help to assure applicants they are becoming professional members of a child welfare team program. Give the applicants time to think over the information. Schedule a second contact to address any concerns before proceeding with medicals, fingerprinting, training, and the mutual assessment process.

(c) Mutual Assessment of the Home and the Family:

(1) The mutual home assessment shall be presented and recorded in such a way that other staff of the supervising agency can make use of the family as a resource for children. The assessment of the home shall indicate whether the home is in compliance with licensing standards.

(2) A mutual home assessment shall include a family history of applicants, including information about parents, siblings, marriages and family support systems; ability to cope with problems, stress, frustrations, crises, and loss; disciplinary methods used by the applicants' parents; personal experiences of abuse and neglect and domestic violence; criminal convictions; drug or alcohol abuse; emotional stability and maturity; ability to give and receive affection; religious orientation, if any; and educational and employment history.

(3) A mutual home assessment shall be made of the applicants' skills and abilities to provide care for children as set forth in [10A NCAC 70E .1104\(a\)](#).

(4) All members of the household shall be assessed with respect to their commitment to providing care for children.

(5) The foster home shall be assessed to determine if there is space to accommodate the number of children recommended for the license capacity.

(6) The foster home applicants shall be assessed with respect to their willingness to participate in shared parenting requirements.

(7) The foster home applicants shall be assessed with respect to their financial ability to provide foster care.

There are 5 parts to the mutual home assessment:

1. Family History

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The first part of the mutual home assessment is the family history. This history, which must cover each person in the foster home, may be recorded in one of two ways:

- a. The Foster Home License Application ([DSS-5016](#)) has spaces for entry of each component of the history information. The form must be completed electronically.
- b. A pre-placement assessment (adoption study) can be substituted for the Family History. In order for the pre-placement assessment to be substituted for the family history it must contain the 28 areas of a pre-placement assessment as described in [10A NCAC 70H .0405](#) and be numbered to indicate those 28 areas. If you select this option, indicate that you have done so on the [DSS-5016](#) under 'Mutual Home Assessment' and attach it after the signature page of the DSS5016.

With either option, the family history must cover each of the following elements:

- **Parentage:** describe the person's parents from their first marriage to their present situation. Describe whether the applicant's parent was married more than once, how these marriages affected the applicant, and how these experiences might affect the applicant's parenting abilities. If previous marriages did not affect the applicant, state that finding in the history. For example, a history may read:

"John's mother married for the first time in 1965 to her high school sweetheart. She gave birth to John in 1967. She divorced in 1970 and married her current husband in 1975. As far as John can tell, his mother's divorce had no negative lasting impact on him. He knows his father but is not in contact with him."

- **Siblings:** list each person's siblings; give gender and date of birth. Birth order is important. Describe where each sibling resides, their marital status, and how many children they have. Describe the nature of the relationship the applicant has with siblings, nieces, and nephews. For example, a history may read:

"John has a sister and a brother. Susan is the oldest, born August 1, 1966. She is married and has three children: two boys and a girl. John sees this family about three times a year, including at Christmas. John's brother, Dan, born February 2, 1970, is the youngest of the three. He is single, working as a computer analyst with a major company in White Plains, New York. John stays in contact with Dan via the internet and at the annual family Christmas reunion at their mother's home each year."

- **Family Support Systems:** Describe how the family is supported in times of crisis and challenge. Describe on whom each person relies for advice and guidance. These people may or may not be relatives. For example, a history may read:

"John does not rely on his family for emotional support. Although he has a good relationship with his relatives, he relies on his friend, Jacob, when he is in need. John and Jacob went to the same high school and played varsity football together. Ever since, John has relied on Jacob for emotional support. Jacob was

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best man at his wedding and helped John build the extension on his house. Jacob is married with children and works as an electrical contractor.”

- **Parents’ Methods of Discipline:** People tend to discipline as they were disciplined. Applicants need to understand this. This item should include the applicant’s recollections about how he was disciplined as a child, which methods he wishes to reject, and how he will learn different methods of discipline. For example, a history may read:

“John recalls that his step-dad would spank him with a leather belt. Before pre-service training, John felt that this approach ‘knocked some sense into him.’ Now he realizes that such methods were actually ineffective in changing his behaviors. He wishes to master the use of time out and natural consequences as methods of discipline with his own children. He says he wants more training in how to discipline more effectively.”

- **Experience with Child Abuse and Neglect and Domestic Violence:** People who have unresolved issues from physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or from domestic violence often find it difficult to effectively parent children in foster care. Recording the memories of these events and their resolution is an important part of the assessment. For example, a history may read:

“John has vague memories of his first three years when his mother was married to his father. After pre-service training, John discussed these times with his mother. Although there was no actual violence between his mother and father, they did have several loud and hurtful arguments. Once his mother shared this, John has gotten in touch with his feelings and has some understanding as to why he feels so uneasy when people yell and curse. He says such awareness is helping him parent his teenage son.”

- **Ability to Cope with Problems, Stress, Frustrations, Crises, and Loss:** Describe several problems the applicant solved successfully; identify the skills the applicant used. Describe small problems and at least one major problem that affected the applicant’s life. For example, a history may read:

“John says the biggest problem he has faced was how to find a career he enjoyed. He felt trapped as a clerk working in the supermarket. He solved this problem by asking Jacob what he should do. Jacob suggested night school in carpentry. John asked for his wife’s support as he completed a two-year course and then worked as an apprentice carpenter. Now he owns his own shop and is successful. John’s use of his skills of asking for advice and support has worked well in other areas also.”

It is crucial that applicants understand that before becoming foster parents they need to deal with any major life changing events that they have experienced the past year. These include marriages, deaths, births, changes in household composition

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(gaining/losing family members), loss of employment, changes in health status, etc. Applicants need to wait at least a year after any of these events occur before making an application to become a foster parent.

- **Stresses and Frustrations:** Applicants must be able to describe the stresses and frustrations they experience in their daily lives and how they cope with them. If applicants claim not to experience stress or frustration, they may be in denial. Help the applicant get in touch with their stresses and frustrations and describe how they cope with them. For example, a history may read,

“John is reluctant to acknowledge that his carpentry business is stressful. He does not want to worry Sally. He worries a lot about getting business, although he has more work than he can do in a regular weekly schedule. He copes by spending a lot of extra time in the evenings marketing his business. One of his key frustrations is lack of reliable help. He currently is recruiting someone to be business manager. He states that when things really get bad, he goes fishing.”

- **Crises and Loss:** Children coming into care are in crisis; they are suffering loss. Separation from their birth families is a traumatic experience. To care for them, foster parents need to be aware of their own experiences with crisis and loss. Ask applicants to describe a time of crisis in their lives and how they responded. Sometimes a crisis involves a significant loss (e.g., the death of a loved one, loss of a job or a home). Help applicants identify how they grieved this loss. For example, a history may read:

“John says that the biggest crisis in his life was the sudden death of his father. John became depressed and at times found it difficult to meet his family responsibilities and his work obligations. His work deteriorated to the point that he was about to lose his job. His supervisor referred him to their Employee Assistance Program. John received individual counseling and attended group sessions with other individuals dealing with loss. These services were instrumental in helping him cope with the loss of his father. He acquired skills that have been helpful in facing other losses. He feels that this experience will help him understand children who are experiencing grief and loss. ”

- **Criminal History:** In most cases, an applicant has no criminal history. If that is the case, note so in appropriate space on the [DSS-5016](#). For example, a history may read,

“John has no known criminal history.”

In cases where there are minor infractions, list them and offer explanation. The space in item C of the [DSS-5016](#) is provided for this explanation. For example, the section under “Local Court Record, Findings and Dates” may read:

“08/03/1982 Driving without license; 06/12/1985 Reckless Driving; 05/23/1988 public intoxication. ”

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Explanation of Findings may read:

“In 1982, John drove the family car around the block just to see if could do it. A patrol officer who knew him to be under age gave him a ticket. In 1985, he was cited for driving 15 miles over the speed limit. In 1988 John’s attention was distracted while driving around with some friends. He failed to see a stop sign and caused a minor accident. John says he learned from these infractions to obey traffic laws and the accident awakened him to the potential harm that can be brought about by not being alert and conscientious when driving.”

- Experience with Alcohol or Drug Abuse: People who have a problem with alcohol should not care for children. Alcoholism is a disease that affects judgment, perception, and attention. In some stages of the disease, the person is unresponsive or passes out. Since alcohol is a legal drug, it is important to make sure that the applicant is responsible in its use.

If the applicant uses alcohol, explore in detail how he or she handles its use so that it does not interfere with the care of children. For example, the applicant may restrict usage to a glass of wine at dinner. Maybe alcohol is consumed only when at least one other responsible adult is present and not drinking. The applicant may go out with friends to a sports bar and one member of the group serves as a designated driver. Be specific and detailed with this item. Many children come from families where alcohol is abused and where alcohol abuse contributed to the child being placed in foster care.

Many forms of drugs used for recreation are illegal. A home where illegal drugs are present is not a safe home. If the applicant has used such substances in the past, carefully document that usage. Also, document why you are convinced the applicant no longer uses illegal drugs.

Some prescribed medications can be abused. If the applicant uses tranquilizers, antidepressants or pain medication, explore how these medications are used. If in doubt about the applicant’s ability to handle any mood-altering substance, legal or illegal, consult with the applicant’s physician. Make sure your narrative is specific and detailed on this topic. If the applicant does not use mood-altering drugs, say so in the narrative. For example, the history may read:

“John does not use any mood-altering drugs such as alcohol, medications or illegal substances.” If the applicant has used such substances, explain in detail. For example, a history may read: *“John acknowledges he was a heavy drinker in his youth. Now he drinks in moderation. He likes to have a couple of beers while watching Sunday NFL football games. Sally does not participate so she can be available for the children. John likes to go to a sports bar for the Super Bowl. Since he may consume alcoholic beverages at that event, he goes and comes home by taxicab or with a designated driver. John says he did try marijuana*

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while in the service. Since marijuana is illegal, he says he no longer smokes it. He says he is on no mood-altering medications.”

- **Educational and Employment History:** List each of the diplomas, degrees, and certifications earned by the applicant. If the applicant started a level of study and did not finish, note this in the narrative. List each job held by the applicant, with beginning dates and ending dates. Of particular importance are any unusual accomplishments or issues in the applicant’s work history. If the applicant excelled in a subject, list that. If the applicant struggles, document that also. If the applicant did well in a job, note the accomplishment. If the applicant was dismissed from a job, note the reason and the applicant’s reactions. The intention here is to present the pattern of efforts and accomplishments. For example, a history may read:

“John graduated high school in 1985. He says he loved shop and wood working classes and hated English grammar classes. He enrolled at the local community college but dropped out after three semesters. He did not like freshman English and thought that freshman civics was a waste of time. He joined the US Army and served for four years. After discharge in 1990, he went back to community college majoring in business. He attended night school and graduated with an associate degree in 1992. He studied carpentry and earned a master builders certificate in 1994. He worked as an assistant carpenter with Dubois Construction Company from 1993 to 1996. When offered a management job, he decided to open his own company. Excel Carpentry began in 1997 with one small shop and one employee. It now has operations in five locations and employs eight carpenters. John owns the company.”

- **Religious Orientation:** A religious orientation is not a requirement for licensure as a foster parent. Applicants may or may not have religious preferences or expectations for themselves. However, it is important to explore this subject with applicants to determine their religious expectations for children placed in their home. How do they celebrate/express their faith? How will they react to a child who has a different faith? How will they react to a child that has no religious training and does not want to attend religious services? For example, a history may read:

“John and Sally are very active in a church and serve on various committees and teach a Sunday school class. Church is very important to them and they expect to offer any child the opportunity to attend. They recognize they may be asked to help a child in their home celebrate another faith. They are willing to do this. However, they do acknowledge that it may be difficult to provide foster care for a child who refuses to attend religious services or whose parents refuse to let the child attend religious services.”

- **Marriages:** List the dates of each of the applicant’s marriages or significant relationships. If any ended in divorce or termination, describe any unresolved issues that may affect the present family. If there are no unresolved issues, state this in the narrative. Unresolved issues may include continued acrimonious contact with the

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former spouse or partner, unresolved financial issues with the ex-spouse or partner, or children from the marriage or relationship in custody of the ex-spouse or ex-partner. For example, a history may read:

“John and Sally married in 1997. They have a strong marriage and teach a class on Christian marriage at their church. John was married previously in 1994 and divorced in 1995. From this marriage, he has a son. His son and his ex-spouse live in Kansas. John sees his son every summer when he comes to visit for a week at the beach. Sally was married before in 1990 and divorced the following year. There are no unresolved issues from her first marriage.”

- **Parenting Experiences:** When the applicants have raised their own family, they will have a history to draw from. They will be able to share information about their parenting styles, what they learned from their own parenting experiences, what they would do differently in retrospect. They will be able to talk about the joys and trials of parenting their own children. Similarly, they may have parented as a stepparent or in another role where they had full time care for children for a period of time. This will be invaluable information in assessing the abilities of the family and identifying areas where the family will need further education and support. If they are not parents, describe any important relationships with relative children or children in youth groups, scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, etc.
- **Emotional Stability and Maturity:** Children need a stable and mature home. If the applicant is subject to mood swings, has emotional outbursts, or makes impulsive decisions, the home atmosphere may be too turbulent. This item requires the licensing social worker to use professional observation skills. Is the applicant aware of his feelings, especially under stress? Does the applicant pause and think when he gets upset? Does the applicant acknowledge his needs and arrange to get those needs met in a harmonious way? For this element, the candid opinion of people who know the applicant can help. This is a good place to make use of references. Document how you know that the applicant is emotionally stable and mature. For example, a history may read:

“John is in touch with his feelings. During one session in my office, he said, ‘Hey, this is feeling like an interrogation. I am feeling a little uncomfortable.’ When asked what would help him feel more secure, he replied, ‘Well, assure me that this information will be kept between you and me.’ Later I observed John with his daughter who was pestering him for money. He paused the conversation, turned to his daughter, and said, ‘I am talking now. When I get through, I will listen to your request. Please be patient for a few more minutes.’

Other indicators of emotional stability and maturity are things like the longevity of a marriage, the applicant’s job history with job changes, which were promotions or career advancements, volunteer activities, etc.

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- Ability to Give and Receive Affection: Foster parents model how adults interact. How family members treat each other impacts children in their care. Many children in foster care have been touched in abusive ways. Foster parents need to be aware of this and comfortable using touch in meaningful ways. Document how the applicant uses touch. Be specific. Also, share how the person responds to touch. For example, the history may read:

“While talking with his daughter about her request for money, John held his daughter’s hand. It seemed this was signal between them that she had his attention. After the discussion, she hugged him. On another occasion, I observed John and Sally holding hands while waiting in the lobby. Once during a meeting with the two of them, John got very sad and started to tear up. He readily accepted his wife putting her hand to his cheek.”

Preparing a good social history takes time and effort. Some writers prepare a genogram to guide their narrative. Others use a chart listing each family member and each of the items listed above. The Family Profile is a tool completed by the family in their own words, addressing these topics and is a resource for the worker compiling the social history. The Family Profile is usually given to the prospective family at one of the group training sessions and then returned to the worker before the end of the group sessions. Make sure the narrative provides answers a reader may have about the family.

2. An Assessment of the Twelve Skills of Foster Parenting

The second part of the mutual assessment is a description of how well the applicant(s) use each of the twelve skills of foster parenting. These skills are described in detail in the Standards for Licensing, Rule Section [10A NCAC 70E .1104](#). Describe the applicant’s strengths and needs related to each of the 12 skills using the [DSS-5016](#). There is space on the form to enter information electronically.

Keep all twelve skills in mind as you observe the applicants as they participate in pre-service training, and as they interact as a family. Observe the family interacting and gather information from different perspectives. Consider asking the family to do one of the following during a home visit:

- Discuss becoming a foster family
- If the family already has children, play a game or engage in some other activity they enjoy
- Discuss how other family members, friends, and neighbors feel about their decision to become foster parents

It can also be instructive to stop by during a mealtime, possibly on your way home from work to deliver something to the family. It is important to see things in real time, rather than just relying on self-report.

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Below are listed suggestions and ideas about how to write descriptions of the twelve skills. To help you with this task we will consider the example of Ms. Smith, who has two children: Jenny, age 7, and Timmy, age 9.

- a. The 12 Skills of Foster Parenting:
- Skill 1: Assess and build on individual and family strengths and needs
 - Skill 3: Identify the strengths and needs of children placed in the home
 - Skill 4: Build on children’s strengths and meet the needs of children placed in the home
 - Skill 7: Help children placed in the home manage their behaviors

These skills build on one another. Skill 1 is a self-assessment. An individual must be able to self-assess before assessing others. Practicing this skill requires identifying personal and family attributes and classifying them as strengths or needs. These strengths and needs then are evaluated according to their value in caring for children. Once applicants are able to assess themselves and other family members (skill 1) they will be ready to identify the strengths and needs of children placed with them (skill 3). Once a child’s strengths and needs are identified that knowledge should direct productive interactions with the child. Skill 4 uses the knowledge gained by skill 3 to develop a plan of action. Skill 7 is applied by building on the child’s strengths and meeting the child’s needs to help the child to manage behaviors useful to the child and the family. To illustrate this set of skills, consider the example involving Ms. Smith. The licensing social worker can ask Ms. Smith:

- “How would you describe the members of your family, both their strengths and areas where they need help?”
- “What kinds of things help Jenny when she has a hard time listening?”
- “You mentioned Timmy is very musical. Is he involved in any kind of musical activities?”
- “Timmy seemed to get frustrated during the game. Can you tell me about that?”

Based on observations, how does Ms. Smith intervene when there are conflicts among family or group members? Does she anticipate when someone might have a hard time or need help? Does she acknowledge when someone does a good job or helps out? Does she set limits firmly and consistently? Does she assign roles and responsibility fairly?

The assessment may read:

“Ms. Smith was/was not able to describe strengths and needs, and demonstrated/did not demonstrate an ability to build on or address them. She showed/did not show an ability to help children manage their behavior.”

Give specific examples, such as:

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“Ms. Smith was able to help her children manage conflicts while playing a game, and in private she was able to list the strengths and needs of each of her children. For example, she said that Timmy takes music lessons to develop this talent, but he sometimes needs help talking things out rather than fighting or yelling.”

To Assess the Following Parenting Skills:

- Skill 2: Use and develop effective communication
- Skill 5: Develop partnerships with children placed in the home, birth family, the agency, and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency

To illustrate this set of skills, let’s look at the example. The licensing social worker can ask Ms. Smith:

- What church or community activities are you involved in?
- What kinds of things do you do at your job?
- Please tell me about a time when you had a problem or conflict at work. How did you resolve it?
- What suggestions do you have for how the pre-service training can be more helpful?
- What were your most favorite and least favorite parts of the training?

The licensing social worker can use the following questions to guide her observations of Ms. Smith:

How does Ms. Smith communicate questions and concerns in one-on-one and group settings?

- Is she able to give negative feedback and admit when she doesn’t know something?
- Is she able to ask for help?
- Does she explain ground rules or expectations to her family?

Based on Ms. Smith’s responses and the licensing social worker’s observations, the assessment may read:

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“Ms. Smith does/does not communicate effectively and develop successful partnerships.”

Give specific examples to support this statement, such as:

“Ms. Smith is a deacon in her church and teaches Sunday school. Ms. Smith is a store manager who leads team meetings and supervises five employees. Ms. Smith was an active member of the pre-service group who asked appropriate questions at the right time and listened to others. Even when someone is saying something with which she strongly disagrees, she listens attentively, paraphrases the comments back to person to their satisfaction and makes sure she heard correctly. After that, she often will say ‘well, I don’t agree,’” and explain the reasons for her opinion.

To Assess the Following Skill

- Skill 6: Help children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and form attachments

It is helpful if the applicant has had personal experience dealing with losses and forming attachments. Ask the applicants to remember a time when they lost a loved one, went through a divorce, lost a job, or friendship. If they have not had these experiences, ask them to recall a friend or someone who did experience such losses. Ask the applicant to share their personal experience; ask how this experience can help a child coming into care. To illustrate this set of skills, let’s look at the example. The licensing social worker can ask Ms. Smith:

- Children coming into foster care have experienced many painful losses.
- Have you ever lost anyone close to you?
- How did you deal with the loss and the anger that followed?
- What helped you during that time?
What did you learn from the experience that might be helpful to a child experiencing her own loss?
- Once you had gotten through the hardest part of your grief, were there certain things that would trigger renewed grief reactions for you?
- What would it be like for you to have a child in your home that might be too wounded to thank you or show any appreciation for what you’re doing?
- What do you think it would be like to have a child return home after being part of your family?

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The licensing social worker can use the following questions to guide her observations of Ms. Smith:

- How does Ms. Smith help family or group members manage frustration or disappointment?
- How does she show affection or give positive feedback?
- How does Ms. Smith respond to a person in denial, in anger, in bargaining, in depression due to grief?
- How does Ms. Smith acknowledge a person has reached the acceptance phase?

Based on Ms. Smith's responses and the licensing social worker's observations, the assessment may read:

"Ms. Smith does/does not have experience coping with loss and helping other people cope with loss."

To support this statement you might say,

"Ms. Smith lost her grandmother, who helped to raise her, five years ago. She describes her faith and her family as major supports in coping with the loss. She said the hardest phase of grieving was the depression stage. She says she knows it takes time to get over feeling depressed, and she says she will help a child when he or she goes through that phase."

To Assess the Following Skills

- Skill 8: Help children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that keep them connected to their pasts

Skill 9: Help children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural and racial identity

These skills attempt to ensure children in foster care maintain contact with their families, culture, and background. Applicants demonstrate these skills by planning and encouraging contacts with birth family members, engaging in shared parenting, and by asking children how they celebrate holidays and incorporating their ideas and traditions into foster family events. Applicants also demonstrate these skills when they maintain contact with their own extended families, and when they display photographs of family members. Applicants who possess Skill 9 are curious about other cultures and enjoy learning and sharing different ways people do things. They are open to differences and

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enjoy sharing them. To illustrate this set of skills, let's look at the example. The licensing social worker can ask Ms. Smith:

- What do you do to keep in touch with family and friends who live in other places?
- What cultural or religious groups do you belong to?
- Please tell me about your family's special family or cultural traditions.
- Please show me the photo albums or scrapbooks you keep for your children.

Based on Ms. Smith's responses and the licensing social worker's observations, the assessment may read:

"Ms. Smith expresses/does not express an understanding of the importance of maintaining attachments and family and cultural identity."

To support this, give examples, such as,

"Ms. Smith is close to her sister, who has adopted two children from Vietnam. She supports her sister's efforts to keep her adopted niece and nephew connected to their culture of origin by celebrating Vietnamese New Year with them and by preparing Vietnamese food for them. One summer she attended Vietnamese culture camp with them."

To Assess the Following Skill

- Skill 10: Provide a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home, which keeps them free from harm.

Many children in foster care are used to exploring and going where they wish. A skilled foster parent will see the home and its exterior spaces through the eyes of a child. Applicants show mastery of this skill by taking the initiative to change their homes to make them safe, healthy, and "kid friendly." Skilled applicants do not presume that the way they raised their own child will be appropriately safe and healthy for children coming into care. Applicants who have not had children may have to do homework, research, and self-education on what is appropriate for children of different ages. Experiences that contribute to mastery of this skill include volunteering at the church nursery, coaching youth sports, and babysitting. To illustrate this skill, let's look at an example. The licensing social worker can ask Ms. Smith:

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- Let's walk around the house and identify any areas that might be unsafe for small children. What adjustments did you have to make for your own children when they were young?
- Who are the regular doctors and dentist for your family?
- What would you do if a child became unconscious?
- Who would you call?
- What is the number?

The licensing social worker can use the following questions to guide her observations of Ms. Smith's mastery of this skill:

- Is Ms. Smith able to identify potential hazards or risks around her home and yard?
- Once identified, does she make changes over time to correct them, or does she minimize risks, express reluctance, or procrastinate?
- Do she and her family have a history of regular preventive health care or of managing chronic illnesses?
- Is the yard kept clear of all standing water to prevent breeding of mosquitoes?
- If she has a dog or cat, how are pet droppings handled and eliminated?

Based on Ms. Smith's responses and the licensing social worker's observations, the assessment may read:

"Ms. Smith has/has not created a safe and healthy environment in her home and is/is not willing to make changes as needed to ensure safety."

You might support this assertion by noting

"Ms. Smith has placed potentially harmful household chemicals in locked cabinets, upgraded her smoke detectors, and made other safety-related changes. What's more, she converted a spare room into a "rainy day" room stocked with books, puzzles, and age-appropriate games so that Timmy and Jenny have a place to play during inclement weather."

To Assess the Following Skills:

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- Skill 11: Assess the ways in which providing family foster or therapeutic foster care affects the family
- Skill 12: Make an informed decision whether to provide family foster or therapeutic foster care

These skills summarize the first ten skills. The licensing social worker can observe these skills in action as the applicant seeks information about children needing placement, comments on the readiness of the home, and uses a structured decision making model. The applicant who possesses these skills can describe how a decision was made as well as the decision itself. To illustrate these skills, let's look at the example. The licensing social worker can ask Ms. Smith: How will providing foster care services affect your family?

- What do your family members think?
- How do you know?
- Have you discussed this with any of your neighbors?
- What do they think?
- Have you done any reading or spoken with anyone else who has provided foster care?

The licensing social worker can use the following questions to guide her observations of Ms. Smith's mastery of these skills:

- How does Ms. Smith explain fostering and the difference it will make to her children?
- Has she given her family members a chance to express their concerns?
- Does she seem realistic in her expectations?
- Can she describe the challenges her family faces in taking in children?

Based on Ms. Smith's responses and the licensing social worker's observations, the assessment may read:

"Ms. Smith has/has not assessed the ways fostering will impact her family and is/is not making an informed decision."

Give concrete, specific examples to support this conclusion, such as

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“Ms. Smith realizes that her family will have to spend more time in meetings and taking children to medical appointments.”

The mutual home assessment is not biography or autobiography. It is a joint effort between the licensing social worker and the applicant. The writing may take several drafts as the applicant reviews what is written and adds corrections or clarifications.

b. Guidelines and Suggestions:

- For each skill, present a general conclusion followed by examples that provide supporting evidence. For example, for Skill 9 the general conclusion may read:

“Ms. Smith expresses an understanding of the importance of maintaining attachments and family and cultural identity.”

Then follow with specific examples to support the general conclusion:

“Ms. Smith supports her sister’s efforts to keep her adopted niece and nephew connected to their culture of origin by celebrating Vietnamese New Year with them and by preparing Vietnamese food”.

- Supporting examples should avoid affective/cognitive terms such as “understands,” “knows,” “feels,” and “appreciates.” Instead, support conclusions by describing the applicant’s specific behaviors or the words that she used. For example, you might write:

“Ms. Smith, who lost her grandmother five years ago, says she recovered from the loss through prayer, increased involvement in her church, and by spending additional time in her garden.”

- Remember that applicants can demonstrate the twelve skills in ways that don’t involve children, such as in their job, volunteer work, or hobbies. Many foster parents say the twelve skills are just good life skills and can be applied in a variety of situations.
- There are two other important sources of information to help assess applicants’ skills. The first is foster parent pre-service training MAPP/GPS. Foster parents complete the strengths/needs worksheets for every week of MAPP/GPS. Group leaders are also encouraged to do meeting notes during MAPP/GPS. Both these items should be in the parent’s MAPP/GPS portfolio and should be used as a foundation to build on for further discussion and clarification. Even if you are not teaching your applicants’ particular class, collaborate with the teacher so you can follow up with families on concerns they identify for themselves as they learn about the twelve skills.

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(5) The foster home shall be assessed to determine if there is space to accommodate the number of children recommended for the license capacity.

3. The Home

The fourth part of the mutual home assessment is a description of the foster home itself. Make sure there is sleeping and living space to accommodate the capacity (number of children) recommended for the license. Carefully review the exterior and interior, taking note of any dangers or concerns that can harm children. After walking through the house and grounds, complete the Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report ([DSS-5150](#)) and the appropriate part of the [DSS-5016](#). On the [DSS-5016](#), identify the space for each child. Make sure all relevant questions are answered and explanations provided on the [DSS-5016](#).

(6) The foster home applicants shall be assessed with respect to their willingness to participate in shared parenting requirements.

4. Shared Parenting

The fifth part of the mutual home assessment describes the applicant's willingness to participate in shared parenting. In Shared Parenting, the applicant will have contact and dealings with parents who have done hurtful things to their children. Applicants may have difficulty understanding the behaviors and attitudes of some birth parents. Alternatively, the applicant's values may clash with the birth parent's values. To address the issue of Shared Parenting, applicants should use the first of the twelve parenting skills, articulating their strengths and needs around working with a child's birth parents. Shared Parenting is hard emotionally and demands a lot of time. Shared Parenting is an example of a possible need and an area for development by foster parents. The supervising agency must be willing to assist new foster parents with increasing skills in this area. It is helpful for foster parents to become aware that there are ways to practice Shared Parenting that do not involve having face-to-face contact with birth parents (such as sending the child's school work to visits, talking with the birth parents on the phone, having a picture of the birth parent in the child's rooms, etc.). It may be helpful if new foster parents meet experienced foster parents who practice Shared Parenting. You may need to remind foster parents of this commitment after they are licensed and actually involved with birth parents.

Document the applicants' willingness to participate in Shared Parenting on the [DSS-5016](#). As much as possible, use the applicant's actual words. Other sources of information for this part of the assessment are the pre-service trainer and comments made in pre-service training. Over the course of the class many applicants become more receptive to working with birth parents and other agency personnel.

(7) The foster home applicants shall be assessed with respect to their financial ability to provide foster care.

5. Financial Ability

To be licensed as a foster family, the applicant's home must be financially stable and secure. Income in a foster home must cover the bills. Foster care payments are not to be used for basic household expenses. Some sources of income are not stable and are temporary.

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Unemployment compensation, worker's compensation, other injury related payments, college scholarships, stipends and loans, GI Bill, Work First benefits, etc. are not counted in establishing the household's income. Other forms of income such as social security payments, pensions, railroad retirement payments, annuity payments, or any other ongoing income may be counted. The objective is to show that the household is able to meet its financial needs without providing foster care services.

On the [DSS-5016](#) under income, list each source and amount of monthly income, then add them up for a total. For example, an entry may read:

"Mr. Smith wages=\$1600; Ms. Smith wages=\$1200; social security child Sam=\$650; Total monthly income=\$3450."

Next, check the appropriate boxes for expenses covered. Indicate whether child support is being paid for a child not in the home. Indicate whether the support is current or in arrears. If in arrears, give amount and provide an explanation. For example,

"Arrearage \$4,768 in addition to monthly amount of \$750 per court order, Mr. Smith pays an additional \$250 on this arrearage and expects to be current in three months." In space provided, list any other major expenses. For example, "Other bills include \$350 of credit card debt, \$200 to college fund, \$150 boat payment, \$150 on back medical bill for Ms. Smith's operation three years ago. She had elective surgery not covered by insurance."

Some foster parents will experience the loss of a job and income while providing foster care services. Children should not be moved simply because foster parents experience loss of job. However, it is an expectation, that the supervising agency will be more present and supportive in the family's life, and that no additional children will be placed in the home. In addition, once any foster child leaves the home, other foster children should not be placed in the home until the foster parent(s) is employed and has sufficient income to meet their needs without the foster care stipend.

D. [10A NCAC 70E .0804](#) USE OF REFERENCES

References shall be used to supplement the information obtained through interviews and observation regarding the applicants. All adult members of the foster home shall provide three references to the supervising agency.

All adult members of the foster home must provide three references (e.g., employer, pastor, neighbor, etc.). Interview these people as part of the assessment process. Use references wisely by following the same format of the twelve skills. References might be able to give specific examples of an applicant exhibiting the skills: How does Ms. Smith let her boss know when she is having a problem? How does Ms. Smith get along with other folks in the neighborhood? Do you know of any times when Ms. Smith helped someone or helped solve a problem in the community? What kinds of things does Ms. Smith do for your church family? A good reference adds to the picture the assessment is creating.

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E. [10A NCAC 70E .0805](#) PERIODIC REASSESSMENT OF HOME

(a) A foster home shall be reassessed at least biennially.

(b) Reassessment shall include a mutual assessment with the foster parents of their skills and abilities to provide care for children, including ways in which they have been able to meet the needs of children placed in their home and areas in which they need further development.

(c) Any changes in physical set up and in the foster parents' capacities for providing foster care since the original home assessment or previous reassessments shall be documented in the family's record.

(d) Reassessment shall be used as a tool for relicensing the home.

Updating the mutual home assessment is part of the relicensing requirements. At a minimum, go over the previous mutual home assessment information with the applicants as part of the relicensure process. An update of the twelve parenting skills is very important. Take time to go over each of the twelve skills. The foster parents should see growth and progress in mastery of these twelve skills. As their strengths improve, foster parents often see other needs they wish to address. Of course, the reassessment includes another examination of the physical space and an update to the social history information.

F. [10A NCAC 70E .0806](#) AGENCY FOSTER PARENT AGREEMENT

The supervising agency foster parents agreement, defining each party's rights and obligations shall be reviewed and signed by the foster parents and the licensing worker at the time of the initial licensing and no less than biennially thereafter.

A productive working relationship between the foster family and the supervising agency is one of the best indicators of a successful placement for a child in care. If the agency and the foster family do not work well together, the child suffers. The Agency Foster/Parents' Agreement ([DSS-1796](#)) or its equivalent must be reviewed with the foster parents at least every two years. This document outlines the minimum expectations for the agency and the foster parents to have a productive working relationship. Guidance about completing the Agency/Foster Parents' Agreement ([DSS-1796](#)) is found in Section .0900 | Forms of this manual.

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V. SECTION .0900 | FORMS

Forms are very important in the licensing processing as they convey the necessary information to the Licensing Authority to make accurate decisions on approving foster home licenses. Supervising agency licensing social workers have the benefit of actually knowing the applicants. They see the applicants interact with children. The licensing social worker hears the words the applicants use in class. They can ask applicants questions and get a reply in a short period of time. It is the job of the licensing social worker to use the system of forms to convey this experience to the Licensing Authority so it may make an accurate decision.

- Foster Home License Application Form ([DSS-5016](#)),
- Foster Home Relicense Application ([DSS-5157](#)),
- Foster Home Transfer Request Application ([DSS-5158](#)),
- Foster Home Change Request Application ([DSS-5159](#)),
- Foster Home Termination Application ([DSS-5160](#)),
- Agency Foster/Parents' Agreement form ([DSS-1796](#)),
- Inter-County Agreement on Placement of Children form ([DSS-1797](#))

Other forms necessary for the licensing process are listed and detailed in The Guide to Completing Foster Home Licensing Forms.

A. [10A NCAC 70E .0901](#) LICENSE APPLICATION

Application for a license shall be made on a form provided by the licensing authority. The supervising agency director or his/her designee shall sign the form and thereby indicate both that the home meets the licensing standards, and that the supervising agency intends to use the home in accordance with the license and provide services to the foster parents. The foster parents shall sign the application indicating their agreement with the information provided, declaring it is true and accurate and understand that according to G.S. 132-1, the information may be furnished to others upon request. The form shall be submitted to the licensing authority at least biennially.

This rule involves two required forms:

- Foster Home License Application ([DSS-5016](#))
- The Foster Home Relicense Application ([DSS-5157](#))
- The DSS-5016 is the initial form for licensure
- The DSS-5157 is the form to continue the licensure after two years.

The DSS-5016 and the DSS-5157 become legal contracts between the state, which issues the license, the supervising agency that oversees the foster home and the foster parents who care for children. The DSS Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016) and the DSS Foster Home Relicense Application initiate the licensing and relicensing processes for the applicant. It is crucial that these forms are completed correctly.

B. [10A NCAC 70E .0902](#) THE AGENCY FOSTER PARENT'S AGREEMENT

Having a good relationship between foster parents and their supervising agency is extremely important. One of the key indicators of a productive placement for a child in foster care is a home that works well with its supervising agency. The supervising agency shall have a written

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agreement with each foster parent that covers the items in this rule. The Agency/Foster Parents' Agreement ([DSS-1796](#)) covers this requirement. The DSS-1796 is an interactive form. It provides a listing of each of the required elements in this rule as well as a space to include other items that may be unique with specific foster parents.

The form opens in adobe and has spaces to enter the names of the foster parents, the agency, and amount of payments, other provisions and dates of signatures. Print the form and have it signed by all parties. A signed copy of this form remains in the supervising agency file for reference. Give a copy to the foster parents for their records. It is very important that the foster parents understand each item in the agreement.

The subsections of this rule read:

- (a) Foster parents shall sign an agreement under which the foster parents shall:
- (1) allow the representative of the supervising agency to visit the home in conjunction with licensing procedures, foster care planning, and placement;

Help applicants understand that they give up a degree of family privacy and autonomy when they become licensed foster parents. They become part of a larger child welfare system and serve as team members and service providers for the children placed in their home. Licensing social workers, foster care social workers, qualified professionals, clinicians as well as other professionals will be visiting in their home and observing interactions between foster parents and foster children.

- (2) accept children into the home only through the supervising agency and not through other individuals, agencies, or institutions;

A foster home is licensed as an agent of a specific child-placing agency. They are not independent contractors who may do business with other agencies. Nor are they freelance child-care providers who may take in children off the street. Any child that comes into their home as a foster child must be placed with the permission of the supervising agency. In fact, if they allow a child who is a relative to come and stay for a long period of time, the licensing social worker should be informed; there should be no surprises about who resides in the home.

- (3) treat a child placed in the home as a member of the family, and when so advised by the supervising agency, make every effort to support, encourage, and enhance the child's relationship with the child's parents or guardian;

Help foster parents understand that the child is placed with them on a temporary basis. Foster care is not intended to be a forever home for a child in care. Children in foster care already have a family; it is hoped they may return to that family. The role of the foster home is to provide a safe, supportive family experience for the child. To do this, they open up a place in their home, in their family and in their hearts.

- (4) Maintain continuous contact and exchange of information between the supervising agency and the foster parents about matters affecting the adjustment of

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any child placed in the home. The foster parents shall agree to keep these matters confidential and discuss them only with the supervising agency staff members, or with other professional people designated by the agency;

Foster parents are members of the professional child welfare team. As such, they keep their team members informed and expect their team members to keep them up to date. There should be no secrets among team members. Foster parents are privy to a lot of sensitive information. They are expected to keep this confidential. The social worker, which operates in an environment where confidentiality is reinforced, can help the foster parents develop ways of discussing their role as caretakers in a way that preserves each child's privacy. Violation of confidential information can result in the revocation of a foster home license.

(5) obtain the permission of the supervising agency if the child is to be out of the home for a period exceeding two nights;

Children are expected to make friends and to want to visit these friends in their homes. Foster children are no different. A sleep over of one or two nights should be an ordinary event. However, foster parents need to understand that they are responsible to assure that anyone that foster children spend time with is safe and responsible themselves. They should take the same precautions for foster children as they would for their own children. Some agencies require foster parents to advise their workers anytime a foster child spends a night with someone else. This is particularly true of therapeutic foster care. Longer periods of time need prior permission. This includes when the foster parents take the child with them on a trip. 'Out of the home' means out of the physical house and not under the oversight of the foster parents. If the child is going with the family on vacation, the child's social worker needs to know and approve the trip.

(6) report to the supervising agency any changes in the composition of the household, change of address, or change in the employment status of any adult member of the household;

As team members, foster parents are expected to keep the supervising agency up to date on any changes in the family. If someone moves into the foster home, records checks must be done and training may need to be conducted. Foster parents need to advise the supervising agency of changes in employment and income. If any member of the family is charged with a crime or convicted of a crime during the licensing period they will report this to the supervising agency. The supervising agency must report these changes to the Licensing Authority by submitting the Foster Home Change Request Application ([DSS-5159](#)).

(7) make no independent plans for a child to visit the home of the child's parents, guardian, or relatives without prior consent from the supervising agency;

Foster parents are members of a professional team; they are not free agents or freelance childcare providers. Occasionally, foster parents feel they know what is best for the child. When they begin thinking this way, encourage them to call their licensing social worker. Occasionally, foster parents may not understand what the child's social worker is doing for the

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child. When they feel like they are not included in the planning, have them call the licensing social worker. Stress upon the foster parents they are not to arrange for visiting members of the birth family without prior consent. Such visits have ramifications for treatment and services for the child as well as legal ramifications.

- (8) adhere to the supervising agency's plan of medical care, both for routine care and treatment, and emergency care and hospitalization; and

Many children come into care with a history of unmet medical needs.

Foster parents need to understand they may be spending time making sure the child receives the medical care needed. In meeting this need, the foster parents are the agents of the supervising agency; they are expected to follow the medical plan of care developed by medical providers and the supervising agency.

- (9) provide any child placed in the home with supervision at all times while the child is in the home, not leave the child unsupervised, and adhere to the supervision requirements specified in the out-of-home family services agreement or person-centered plan.

Children need to be supervised. Sometimes the supervision may be extensive and beyond what is expected normally for a child of a particular age. The out-of-home family services agreement or person-centered plan sets the level of supervision for the child in care.

- (b) The supervising agency shall sign an agreement under which the supervising agency shall:
 - (1) assume responsibility for the overall planning for the child and assist the foster parents in meeting their day-to-day responsibility towards the child;

Every child in foster care will have an Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement or person-centered plan. These documents are developed by a team serving the child and family. Foster parents are also members of this team. All team members will have specific activities assigned to them that are outlined in the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement or person-centered plan. The supervising agency is responsible for making sure all parties are following the goals, objectives and activities delineated in the agreement or plan. They are also responsible for helping foster parents understand their day-to-day responsibilities in caring for a foster child. This may include training, counseling, guidance, trouble shooting, etc.

- (2) inform the foster parents concerning the agency's procedures and financial responsibility for obtaining medical care and hospitalization;

It is the responsibility of the supervising agency to make sure foster parents understand what is expected of them when medical care is needed for a foster child. This includes routine medical care, emergency medical care and hospitalization. Most foster children have Medicaid to pay for their medical needs. Foster parents need to have access to Medicaid information as well as any other financial resources for medical care.

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- (3) pay the foster parents a monthly room and board payment, and if applicable, a respite care payment for children placed in the home;

The supervising agency is responsible for reimbursing foster parents for room and board. Therapeutic foster parents receive reimbursement for the provision of therapeutic foster care services. Foster parents should receive their payments on a monthly basis at a set time. Some supervising agencies provide a respite care payment for foster children. This possibility needs to be discussed with foster parents.

- (4) discuss with the foster parents any plans to remove a child from the foster home;

Foster care is temporary. Foster parents need to understand that the child will leave their care. As team members, foster parents need to know the long-range plans for the child. Inform foster parents about the role of the court as far as having the final decision regarding permanent plans for foster children. Foster parents need to be apprised of court dates and encouraged to attend court hearings. Many children in therapeutic foster care are not in the custody of a county department of social services. Foster parents need to understand that once the treatment needs of the child are met discharge from foster care will occur.

- (5) give the foster parents notice before removing a child from the foster home;

Keep foster parents informed of plans and actions. Foster parents deserve to know when a child will leave their care. Such notice encourages the foster parents to prepare the child and to prepare themselves for a significant event in their lives. Encourage the foster parents to think through and to feel through how they wish to say good-bye to the child. Help foster parents prepare for this event.

- (6) visit the foster home and child according to the out-of-home family services agreement or person-centered plan and be available to give needed services and consultation concerning the child's welfare;

Make sure foster parents have copies of out-of-home family service agreements and person-centered plans. Visit the foster home on a regular basis as determined by the agreement or plan or needs of the foster child and foster parents. Provide consultation and services to foster parents that will enhance the goals and objectives outlined in the agreement or plan as well as the overall ability of the foster parents to provide foster care services. It is the agency's responsibility to make sure foster parents have help and advice when needed.

- (7) respect the foster parents' preferences in terms of sex, age range, and number of children placed in the home;

Foster parents know better than anyone the characteristics and number of foster children they can care for. Their preferences should be respected. Foster parents forced or manipulated into accepting children they are not confident caring for can result in disruptions, inappropriate discipline, abuse and neglect, etc.

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- (8) provide or arrange for training for the foster parents;

Fostering is complicated work. It is more than long-term childcare. Children come into care with problems. Foster parents need to be prepared for these demands. Training is an ongoing requirement. Child-specific training is essential. Foster parents are required to have 10 hours of in-service training annually and it is the responsibility of the supervising agency to provide or arrange the training. Training should be results oriented. After a foster parent has completed a training program, look for changes in behavior, knowledge or attitude. If you do not see changes, check to see if the training has met the foster parent's needs.

- (9) include foster parents as part of the decision-making team for a child; and

It is imperative to include foster parents as members of any decision-making team for children they care for. They are part of the agency and should be respected as colleagues. Keep foster parents apprised of court dates, team meetings, etc. Team meetings should be held at times that are convenient for foster parents. Childcare arrangements should be provided.

- (10) allow foster parents to review and receive copies of their licensing record.

Encourage foster parents to maintain their own licensing file. Encourage them to examine and review all licensing documents and forms kept by the agency. The foster parent record includes: Agency/Foster Parent Agreement, Discipline Agreement; Local Court Record Check, Health Care Personnel Registry Check, NC Department of Corrections Check, Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry Check, Quarterly Assessments, Training Logs, and the most recent licensing or relicensing packet sent to the Licensing Authority.

- (c) The agreement shall also contain any other provisions mutually agreed by the parties.

This is the opportunity to tailor the agreement to the unique needs of a foster home. List any specific expectations the agency has of the foster parents as well as any specific expectations the foster parents have of the agency.

- (d) The foster parents and a representative of the supervising agency shall sign and date the agreement initially and at each relicensure. The foster parents and the supervising agency shall retain copies of the agreements.

Make sure all parties sign the agreement and that each party has a copy of the signed agreement.

C. [10A NCAC 70E .0903](#) DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES INTERCOUNTY AGREEMENT

This rule applies to county departments of social services. It does not apply to private child-placing agencies. For more detail on this rule, please refer to [Jurisdiction in Cross Function Topics in the NC Child Welfare manual](#). Providing Services when multiple counties are involved.

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County department of social services social workers placing children in another county are required to complete the Inter-County Agreement on the Placement of Children form ([DSS-1797](#)).

The DSS-1797 is an interactive form that can be completed on screen then printed. The form covers the requirements listed below.

The subsections of this rule read:

- (a) *Before children are placed in a foster home in a county (the supervising county) other than the county of their home (the responsible county), the two county departments of social services shall agree in writing that the supervising county shall:*
- (1) *Accept responsibility for supervising the child;*
 - (2) *Not initiate placement planning for the child without prior agreement from the responsible county, except when an emergency placement in another foster home or licensed facility is necessary;*
 - (3) *Immediately inform the responsible county when an emergency placement in another foster home or licensed facility precludes prior approval;* (4) *Engage in no treatment or planning relationship with the child's parents, guardian, or relatives, except upon request of the responsible county;*
 - (5) *Keep the case confidential; and*
 - (6) *Submit to the responsible county, at intervals specified in the agreement, a written evaluation of the child's adjustment.*
- (b) *In the agreement, the responsible county shall agree to:*
- (1) *Make payments for room and board and difficulty of care or respite care, if applicable, to the supervising county in the amounts and at the times specified in the agreement;*
 - (2) *Take responsibility for placement of the child;*
 - (3) *Make restitution, in accordance with a plan specified in the agreement, for damage that the child causes to the foster parents' property;*
 - (4) *Inform the supervising county concerning future planning for the child; and* (5) *Write the room and board check in a manner specified in the agreement, in order to protect confidentiality.*
- (c) *The agreement shall specify the manner in which payment for clothes, medical costs, and allowances shall be made.*
- (d) *The agreement shall specify the dates between which the agreement shall be effective. The agreement shall be signed by the directors of the two county departments of social services. The responsible county and the supervising county shall each have a signed copy of the agreement. The responsible county shall provide the children's services program representative with a copy of the signed agreement, if requested.*

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VI. SECTION .1000 | CAPACITY

A. [10A NCAC 70E .1001](#) FOSTER HOME

There are two types of foster care in North Carolina: family foster care and therapeutic foster care. Children are typically placed in family foster care due to abuse, neglect, or dependency. These children need out-of-home care until their birth parents are able to provide a safe and stable home or, if this is not possible, until another permanent plan is achieved. Although children in family foster care may have mental health needs, this is not the primary reason for out-of-home placement. Children are placed in therapeutic foster care due to behavioral mental health or substance abuse needs. Therapeutic foster care is a more intense level of care that is guided by the treatment needs of the children.

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) No more than five children shall reside in any family foster home at any time. These five children include the foster parent's own children, children placed for family foster care, licensed capacity for in-home day care children, children kept for babysitting or any other children residing in the home. Children kept for in-home day care and babysitting are considered residents of the home.

No more than five (5) children may reside in a family foster home. This includes the family's own children, relative children, in-home day care children, babysitting children, or any other children who reside or stay in the home either on a permanent or temporary basis. If a child is under the supervision of the foster parent on a regular basis, the child is included in the capacity count. This includes children who primarily live with one parent but visit the other parent on a regular basis. This rule does not mean that friends of children in foster care or other children in the home cannot come over to play or occasionally spend the night. When an applicant for family foster care has an in-home day care a copy of the in-home day care license must be submitted to the Licensing Authority. The capacity on the in-home day care license is counted in determining the total number of children in the home.

(b) No more than four children including no more than two foster children shall reside in any therapeutic foster home at any time. The four children include the foster parent's own children, children placed for therapeutic foster care, children placed for family foster care or any other children living in the home. Therapeutic foster parents shall not provide in-home day care or baby-sitting services in the therapeutic foster home.

No more than four children may reside in a therapeutic foster home. Therapeutic foster families may provide foster care for no more than two children. They are limited to only two additional children in the home, including their own children, relative children, other children, etc. For example, if a therapeutic foster family has three children of their own, the capacity of the therapeutic foster home is one. Therapeutic foster families may not provide in-home daycare or babysitting services.

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(c) *Exceptions to the capacity standards in Paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Rule may be made:*

It is important that siblings requiring out-of-home care remain together. Rather than break up groups of brothers or sisters, this rule provides a means to modify capacity requirements. The purpose of capacity exceptions is to accommodate the needs of sibling groups, not the placement needs of the supervising agency. Since exceeding capacity puts a strain on the foster family, documentation requirements must also be met before the Licensing Authority will grant a waiver for capacity.

(1) If written documentation is submitted to the licensing authority for family foster care that siblings will be placed together and the foster home complies with Subparagraphs (3) and (4) of this Paragraph. The out-of-home family services agreement for each sibling shall specify that siblings will be placed together and shall also address the foster parents' skill, stamina, and ability to care for the children;

The rule refers to increasing capacity to keep siblings together for family foster care; this means all of the foster children in the home must be siblings. For example, a family foster home is licensed for three children. There are three non-related foster children in the home and the family has one child of their own. The supervising agency needs to place a sibling group of two. These two children cannot be placed in this home because they are not siblings of the three foster children already placed in the home.

All children placed in family foster care are required to have an out-of-home family services agreement. To place a sibling group in a licensed family foster home beyond the capacity limits set above, the out-of-home agreement for each child must clearly state siblings will be placed together and it is in their best interests to be placed together.

Secondly, the agreement must have a statement about the skill, stamina, and ability of the foster parents to care for the additional children. A statement may read,

"The Smith home can handle the demands of Josh, Jim, and John. Their three children are teenagers, ages 14, 16, and 17. The 17-year-old is in college and home infrequently. The home is spacious, with a large bedroom with three separate beds for the three boys. The foster parents are in very good health. This home has been used before for young children with attachment issues. The family has discussed this placement and is ready to care for this set of siblings."

Make sure the revised agreement has the requisite signatures.

(2) If written documentation is submitted to the licensing authority for therapeutic foster care that siblings will be placed together and the foster home complies with Subparagraphs (3) and (4) of this Paragraph. The person-centered plan or out-of-home family services agreement for each sibling shall specify that siblings shall be placed together and shall also address the foster parents' skill, stamina, and ability to care for the children;

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The rule refers to increasing capacity to keep siblings together for therapeutic foster care; this means all of the foster children in the home must be siblings. For example, Johnny and Tommy who are not siblings are placed in a therapeutic foster home. At a later time Tommy's brother and sister need to be placed in foster care. However, they cannot be placed in the same home with Tommy because Johnny is not their sibling.

Children in the custody of a county department of social services must have both a person-centered-plan (PCP) and an out-of-home family services agreement. To place a sibling group in a therapeutic foster home beyond the capacity limits set above, the PCP for each child must clearly state siblings will be placed together and it is in their best interests to be placed together. Similarly, the out-of-home family services agreement for siblings placed together in therapeutic foster care must state that placement together is in their best interests.

To be granted a capacity waiver for the placement of sibling groups in therapeutic foster care, you must document that the foster family has the skill, stamina, and ability to care for children in excess of the prescribed capacity for a therapeutic home. You must also describe the evidence that the family can handle the additional needs of each child. When siblings are placed together in a therapeutic foster home, some siblings may receive therapeutic foster care while others receive family foster care.

There is a reason that capacity is set at two therapeutic foster children. Sometimes foster parents overestimate their endurance. Therapeutic foster care often requires that an adult be with the child at all times. A careful and objective social work assessment can help the foster parents understand the additional demands of accepting a sibling group into therapeutic care.

(3) If written documentation is submitted to the licensing authority that the foster home complies with [10A NCAC 70E .1108](#); and

Any home accepting a sibling group that exceeds capacity should be revisited to make sure all safety requirements are met. It is recommended that the licensing social worker review the requirements in rules section 10A NCAC 70E .1108. Inspect the home to ensure it continues to meet the requirements detailed on the Foster Home Fire Inspection Report ([DSS-1515](#)) and the Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report ([DSS-5150](#)). Make sure that the home has the space for the extra children. Remember, placing a sibling group under these rules means exceeding the normal capacity and safeguards covered by these rules overall. There is less room for error, so be extra diligent on all requirements, especially safety issues.

(4) If written documentation is submitted to the licensing authority that the foster home complies with [10A NCAC 70L .0102](#).

This rule covers the basic criteria of waiving any Health and Human Services rules. Waivers are not granted for any rules based on a standard adopted by the Building Code Council and subject to the general supervision of the Commissioner of Insurance, the rules of the Commission of Public Health, or the rules of fire safety. The waiver remains in effect for the

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term of the current license and may be renewed if needed. Waivers are requested on the Foster Home Request for Waiver form ([DSS-5199](#)).

(d) Family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes shall not provide Community Alternative Programs services for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA) as defined in Section 1915(c) of the Social Security Act, unless the disabled adult was placed in the foster home as a Community Alternatives Programs for Children (CAP C) client as defined in Section 1915(c) of the Social Security Act prior to his/her 18th birthday. The disabled adult shall be included in the capacity for the foster home. Family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes shall not provide supervised living services as defined by [10A NCAC 27G .5601](#).

Foster homes are not permitted to provide CAP/DA (Community Alternatives Programs for Disabled Adults) services, CAP-I/DD (Community Alternatives Program for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities) services, AFL (Alternative

Family Living), supervised living services or any services or programs governed by [10A NCAC 27G](#). However, foster homes can provide CAP/C (Community Alternatives Programs for Children) services. CAP/C clients are counted toward the capacity of the foster home. If a CAP/C client turns 18 while in care and begins receiving CAP/DA services the client can remain in the foster home. However, the client is counted toward the total capacity for the home.

(e) Members of the household 18 years old and over and not receiving foster care services are not included in the capacity, but there shall be physical accommodations in the home to provide them room and board.

Adult household members are not included in the capacity of the foster home. These individuals cannot share bedrooms with children in foster care and must meet all safety and health requirements specified in [10A NCAC 70E](#).

B. HB-815, THE LOVING HOMES ACT

HB-815 states the following:

"A family foster home that would otherwise qualify for family foster home licensure or placement of one child or siblings in foster care but does not qualify solely due to the presence five children in the home, shall be eligible for licensure as a family foster home for placement of a child or siblings in foster care. Written documentation must be submitted to the licensing authority that siblings will be placed together to allow more than five children to be placed in the foster home under this section. The out-of-home family services agreement for each sibling shall specify that siblings will be placed together. Any family foster home qualifying for placement of more than five children under this section shall meet all other licensure requirements."

HB-815 allows an exception for families that already have five children in the home to become licensed as family foster home if the family meets all other licensure requirements. When the family's licensure application is sent to NC DHHS, the capacity request shall be zero because a waiver will be required prior to any children being placed in the home.

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When submitting a waiver request to NC DHHS, the county or child placing agency must submit written documentation that siblings will be placed in the home and address the foster parents' skill, stamina, and ability to care for the children. The county or child placing agency must also provide a copy of each child's out-of-home family services agreement that specifies that the siblings will be placed together as part of the waiver request.

For placement of one child in the foster home, the child to be placed by the county or child placing agency must submit a waiver request – see [10A NCAC 70L .0102 - Waiver of Licensing Rules](#). The county or child placing agency must submit a waiver request that includes written documentation that the child to be placed is related to another child in the home and address the foster parents' skill, stamina, and ability to care for the children.

VII. SECTION .1100 | STANDARDS FOR LICENSING

This set of rules covers the basis for sound foster parenting. A review of this section provides the applicant and the foster home licensing social worker with an overview of the purpose and function of foster parenting. Beginning with client rights and ending with the rules for training, this section addresses most of the aspects of fostering. Foster parent applicants, licensed foster parents, and foster home licensing social workers should be familiar with each of the rules in 10A NCAC 70E .1100. Each of these rules is included on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016). A mastery of these rules helps the licensing social worker guide the applicant and speeds up the licensing process.

A. 10A NCAC 70E .1101 CLIENT RIGHTS

Foster parents are protectors of children in their care; they are defenders of each child's rights. The idea that the parent's preferences and desires are secondary to the rights of a child may be new to some parents. Understanding children's rights helps foster parents appreciate that parenting children in care may be different from parenting their own birth children. Child welfare experience and research show that these rights are essential to caring for children in foster care. Foster parents need to understand, accept, and agree to implement each of these of these rights.

The subsection of this rule reads:

- (a) Foster parents shall ensure that each foster child:
 - (1) Has clothing to wear that is appropriate to the weather;

Foster parents are required to provide suitable and presentable clothes for the children in their care. This includes warm coats and jackets in cold weather, long sleeve shirts, trousers, dresses, skirts, and blouses as needed for the child to feel suitably attired for the climate. Summer clothes include short sleeve shirts, shorts, tee shirts, and suitable shoes for warm weather. Children should have underwear and socks appropriate to their age. All such clothing should be clean and in good condition. The intent of this rule is for the child to be able to engage in activities with other children without feeling conspicuous.

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Licensing social workers should anticipate each child's need for appropriate clothing and discuss wardrobe issues with foster parents before the seasons change. A good time to do this is during a discussion of family rules and practices. Questions that can be asked to raise this subject include: How does the family dress for holiday outings, such as Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, and Labor Day? How will the foster parents help the child to be acceptably dressed? This can be touchy, since the child may be attached to clothing that has strong emotional meaning. Making sure that a child is appropriately attired is not as simple as it may seem to new foster parents.

(2) Is allowed to have personal property;

Children may come into care with few belongings. Such belongings may be their only connection with the home of their birth parents and should be respected. These belongings may need to be protected and the child assured that their property is safe and secure. Sometimes children's property may be offensive to the foster parents (e.g., posters of music artists that portray rebellious behavior, music with lyrics the foster parents find objectionable, etc.). Sometimes these belongings may not meet the hygiene standards of the foster parents. In such cases, the foster parents may need help in accepting children's property in their homes. You may need to provide guidance to help foster parents resist the temptation to forbid, clean, or sanitize the child's personal belongings. As long as the belongings do not pose a health or safety hazard, the child has a right to have personal belongings.

This right is a conditional right requiring foster parents to exercise judgment. A child's safety and health are more important than belongings. An example of belongings that pose a health hazard would be clothing infected with lice. Belongings that may pose a safety hazard are weapons, such as a knife or brass knuckles. Although foster parents must tolerate some items in their home they consider undesirable, they must use good judgment to restrict items that are unsafe or unhealthy. Licensing social workers should counsel foster parents to help them understand the range and limits of a child's right to have personal property.

(3) Is encouraged to express opinions on issues concerning care;

A child may not be pleased to be in a foster home, even if the home is materially better than the home of the child's birth family. The child may miss the home of his parents and express feelings of loss. Loss can elicit feelings of deep anger. Children in care may express this anger by rejecting or denigrating the foster home.

By accepting the child's feelings, foster parents show the child that it is safe to be honest and open in their home. Some children move several times in foster care and may not trust that the current placement will last. In such situations, the child may keep an emotional distance to avoid being disappointed again. One way to keep emotional distance is to criticize the home.

You may need to provide guidance to help foster parents control their own emotional responses if the child makes unflattering comments about them. The licensing social worker can prepare foster parents by helping them to anticipate criticism and plan how they will respond when such comments and feelings are expressed. Children need to know that it is safe to express any opinion in appropriate ways.

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- (4) Is provided care in a manner that recognizes variations in cultural values and traditions;

Each child comes into care with a set of cultural values and traditions. This connection with family is essential to the child's ability to develop a sound self- image and sense of identity. Foster parents are expected not only to accept these values and traditions, but also to help the child maintain and practice these traditions. For example, a foster family used to hugging and touching will need to respect the needs and preferences of children who come from families that do not easily touch each other. Understanding family traditions is important. For children of African ancestry, the practice of Kwanzaa may be as important as celebrating Christmas. Foster parents are expected to become experts on the cultural needs and traditions of the children in their care.

Shared parenting offers foster parents an excellent way to practice this right. Asking the birth parent for guidance on cultural issues and other preferences can be the starting point of a working relationship. This is an excellent opportunity to reinforce with the foster parent the expectation they work with the birth parents. The licensing social worker can help prepare the foster parents for communication with birth parents and set up contacts. The licensing social worker, operating as facilitator between foster parent, the child's social worker, and the birth parent, can show the way that shared parenting and working in partnership benefits the child and his family. (Please refer to Permanency Planning in the [NC Child Welfare manual](#)).

- (5) Is provided the opportunity for spiritual development and is not denied the right to practice religious beliefs;

Child rearing involves helping a child develop morally and spiritually. This is as important as helping the child grow physically and psychologically. At a minimum, each child needs to learn the basic values of honesty, respect for others, and integrity. Many children receive this support and instructions through religious beliefs and practices.

Foster parents help children develop spiritually and morally by instructing children in basic values. They also encourage a child to grow spiritually and morally by maintaining religious practices of the child's family of origin. To develop spiritually, a child needs instruction that is caring and accepting. For a child to practice his or her religious beliefs may require foster parents to be involved in religious practices different from their own. For example, caring for a child from a Catholic family may require the foster parent to take the child to Catholic Mass, confession, etc.

Children in foster care have a right to be free of attempts to change their religious beliefs. Foster parents may not insist that the child participate in the religious activity of the family. An effective way to support children's spiritual development is to ask questions and then listen very carefully for the reply. The licensing social worker may encourage this practice by demonstrating this technique to the foster parents. By asking questions of the foster parents (such as "How do you

know if something is right or wrong?") the licensing social worker can demonstrate how to listen without evaluating or correcting the answer. By asking the foster parents to describe spiritual values

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important to them, the licensing social worker shows the parents how to engage the child. Acceptance is crucial in helping a child develop spiritually. This value can be demonstrated in conversations with foster parents about their own spiritual development.

(6) Is not identified in connection with the supervising agency in any way that would bring the child or the child's family embarrassment;

A child is not a walking advertisement for the child-placing agency. As much as possible, a child in foster care should not stand out from other children in the family or the neighborhood. The child shall not have his or her image (photograph) displayed or circulated in reference to foster care, social services, mental health services, or any other circumstance, which led to the placement of the child. Foster parents may need help so that they do not inadvertently disclose the status of a child in a way that embarrasses the child.

(7) Is not forced to acknowledge dependency on or gratitude to the foster parents;

A child incurs no obligation or duty of gratitude by coming into care. Requiring expressions of gratitude and obligation from a child in foster care can be harmful and dishonest. To require such expressions is an unloving request that hints at power and dominance rather than love and compassion. Licensing social workers can prepare foster parents for the possibility that a child placed in their home may never express gratitude or acknowledge the help received from the foster parents. Foster parents are expected to care for the child with the hope that some day the child will appreciate what was done for them.

(8) Is encouraged to contact and have telephone conversation with family members, when not contraindicated in the child's visitation and contact plan;

Because our origins are important to our development, well-being, and identity, children in care need help maintaining and increasing contact with their families. The best hope for children in foster care is to strengthen their birth family network so they will be nurtured and protected in the care of their birth parents or extended family. This is the central conviction of family-centered practice.

Since many children come into foster care due to abuse or neglect by their birth family, this goal may be difficult for foster parents to grasp. Indeed, encouraging contact with parents who have been neglectful or abusive may seem wrong to the foster parents. If it is not contraindicated in child's visitation and contact plan, foster parents need to presume that contact with family members is to be encouraged, respected, and facilitated. Foster parents will need guidance and instruction to accomplish this.

(9) Is provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience;

Effective parents teach their children to master the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to be more self-reliant and eventually become independent. In a way, training and discipline are a gift a parent gives the child. Foster parenting is no different. Foster parents are expected to train and teach

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the children in their care. Neglecting this parenting duty leaves a child less able to contend with the demands of the larger society.

Training and providing discipline requires an understanding of child development. Children develop physical and mental abilities as they age. Effective foster parents take this into account when training and disciplining children. For example, to tell a preschool child who is taking candy from the display in a store, “Now, we do not eat things that do not belong to us” is ineffective because the child has not yet developed the capacity for abstract thinking. A preschool child needs direct instructions, such as, “If you take the candy off the shelf, we will have to leave the store without getting any at all.” Such a specific statement with direct consequences is more age-appropriate and therefore a more effective method.

An understanding of child development involves an understanding of intelligence levels. Quoting Bible passages on the basis of right and wrong to a child of less than average intelligence may frustrate the child and have limited success. It would be better to accept that such a child needs direct, explicit instructions.

Another factor in child development is being aware of differences in personality. One child may be introverted and need time to think before speaking. Another may be extroverted and need to talk to know what he is thinking. Effective training gives quiet children time to reflect on the lesson and talkative children parental attention while they talk their way to understanding.

Each child comes into care having mastered some developmental tasks. Understanding this and building on this progress makes training and discipline easier. For example, a child who has been helping care for siblings may have learned to make decisions involving other people. Building on this skill by asking the child to help solve problems may enhance their learning.

There are many ways foster parents train and discipline children in their care. By preparing and explaining the house rules to children, the parents help the child understand and respect boundaries. By using positive reinforcement, foster parents can motivate a child to adopt desired behaviors. By giving specific and sincere feedback to a child, a child quickly learns what is expected.

Encourage foster parents to acquire knowledge about child development, since much of child welfare practice uses technical terms such as ‘boundaries,’ ‘stages,’ and ‘needs.’ Provide parents with training, references, and materials in this area. Some experienced foster parents may have learned what new parents need to know. Introduce these experienced foster parents to new ones. The right of the child to effective training and discipline is a key component of a productive experience in foster care.

(10) Is not subjected to cruel or abusive punishment;

Punishment, the imposition of a penalty (something negative or unpleasant), is a tool some parents use in their efforts to discipline children. The ultimate goal of discipline is to teach children what to do and set clear limits about what not to do so that, over time, children learn self-discipline and behave appropriately on their own. As they discipline children, parents have a wide variety of strategies to

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choose from, including time out for younger children, behavior contracts, motivation systems, natural consequences, etc.

Often used after a problem surfaces, punishment can be less effective than other techniques because it: tends to focus on what's wrong instead of what needs to be done right; frequently consists of penalties unrelated to the misbehavior; puts responsibility for enforcement on the parent instead of teaching children to be responsible for their actions. Licensing social workers should make sure that licensed foster parents and foster parent applicants understand both the disadvantages of punishment and more effective methods of managing child behavior.

Some forms of discipline are cruel and abusive and not permitted when it:

- is an act of retribution and intended to inflict pain;
- involves in any way eating, drinking, smelling, seeing, urinating, or having a bowel movement; and
- is intended to show who is boss, demonstrate power and influence, or unduly embarrass someone.

Other forms of cruel and abusive punishment include confining a child, locking a child in a room, time-outs that are not appropriate for the child's age, permanent loss of privileges (e.g., use of the phone), and anything motivated by the desire to invoke fear. If a foster parent is embarrassed or reluctant to tell the licensing social worker or other individuals how they punished a child, the punishment is not acceptable.

Licensing social workers should discuss this topic openly with the foster parents; ask them about their use of discipline strategies. Licensing social workers may need to have multiple conversations with potential foster parents on this topic to get a good indication of how applicants intend to discipline children. Foster parents must understand that at times they may need to be assertive and direct with children who exhibit little or no respect for authority. However, this cannot be done in a cruel or abusive manner. Any "red flags" must be addressed before a placement is made. Encourage the foster parent to call you about this topic any time.

(11) Is not subjected to corporal punishment;

Corporal punishment is the invoking of physical pain as a form of punishment. This restriction prohibits the use of corporal punishment in any form, including the following: hitting, spanking, slapping, pinching, ear pulling, striking, kicking, spitting, eye gouging, or any other form of causing pain to the body of a child.

Make sure foster parents understand this limitation. Some may have been raised by parents who used corporal punishment. Some may have used it raising their own children. With such parents, emphasize that there are no exceptions to the prohibition on using corporal punishment with foster children. Discuss what they should do when they feel a behavior needs to be changed and the child needs consequences in order to make this change. Foster parents should have an action plan ready because some children expect to be hit and may test foster parents to see if they truly are safe. Train foster parents in other forms of discipline; help them problem solve and select appropriate means of

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discipline for children in their care. Encourage foster parents to be consistent with discipline methods; patience is also important; it takes time for children to learn new ways of managing behaviors. Foster parents need more assistance and need to be visited more frequently when a child is first placed in their home. Appropriate discipline and behavior modification techniques are important subjects to discuss during these visits. Help foster parents prepare a behavior modification or a discipline plan before a confrontation with the child occurs.

- (12) Is not deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving;

The foster parent may use isolation time-out as a behavioral control measure when the foster parent provides it within hearing distance of a foster parent. The length of time alone shall be appropriate to the child's age and development; Depriving a child of necessities is cruel, inappropriate and an unacceptable disciplinary practice. Help foster parents understand that withholding necessities such as food, contact with family, warm clothes in the winter, access to the house when it is hot or cold outside, all are considered deprivations and are not effective or appropriate forms of discipline. Locking a child in a room or closet is not allowed. Many children in care have experienced the trauma of being physically or emotionally abandoned. Any form of deprivation may trigger feelings of terror and helplessness. Children in foster care need to know that they will never be abandoned.

One effective discipline technique is “time out,” during which a child is asked to go to an area where there is nothing fun, amusing, or stimulating for the child to do. This area cannot be locked and the child cannot be physically prevented from leaving. Time out is not punishment. Rather, the intent is to allow the child to regain emotional composure so he or she can comply with the parent’s request. Time out should be tailored to the developmental level of the child. Time out periods are usually about a minute for each year of the child’s age. Children placed in time out should be within hearing distance of the foster parent.

- (13) Is not subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about himself/herself or his/her families;

Words can be cruel, especially when used on someone who is dependent on you for the basic necessities. Young children are unable to leave a home where they are verbally abused; teenagers are restricted by law from leaving. Name-calling is not allowed in foster homes when a child is in placement. If name-calling is a usual practice in a home, the licensing social worker should be very cautious about using such a home. Name-calling ranges from calling a child a “brat” to name calling about a child’s race, ethnicity, **and/or** place of origin. Words such as ‘dummy,’ ‘shorty,’ ‘beanpole,’ ‘tubby,’ ‘fatty,’ ‘carrot top,’ ‘four eyes,’ etc. are inappropriate, even if used in jest. Children in foster care are aware of many of the societal prejudices and opinions about themselves, their parents, and their families. Many feel the shame such labels and prejudicial statements incur. For many children in foster care even nicknames are experienced as a type of name-calling. Therefore, the use of any term except their name is not appropriate unless the child voluntarily requests that he or she be called by his or her nickname. Some families give each other nicknames as a sign of affection. Some families use

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verbal threats as a means to emphasize they are serious about a topic. Such habits need to be curtailed when foster children are in the home.

- (14) Is provided a daily routine in the home that promotes a positive mental health environment and provides an opportunity for normal activities with time for rest and play;

Effective foster homes encourage growth and development. In these homes the daily foster home routine assures that each person feels seen, heard, wanted, and appreciated. Meeting each person's needs in the home is imperative. Each person's strengths should be identified, appreciated, and utilized. In effective foster homes, the routine includes times for rest and sleep, recreation and play. There are times to work and improve the home, as well. These times are predictable and reliable. When asked, the foster parents can describe a 'typical' day in the life of their family.

Often children come from homes that are chaotic and unreliable. People may eat, play, and sleep at random times. Meeting individual needs is not the concern in such families; each person is expected to meet his own individual needs. The environment may be competitive and self-centered. Children in foster care may find it strange to be in an environment of positive mental health. It may be a new experience to be appreciated, recognized as special, and welcomed into a household where family members show concern and care for each other.

Initially, the child may not accept the routine in the home. Foster parents need to be patient and persistent. Most children will soon begin to feel comfortable and thrive in the homes where a dependable routine of compassion and nurturance is provided.

- (15) Is provided training in good health habits, including proper eating, frequent bathing, and good grooming. Each child shall be provided food with nutritional content for normal growth and health. Any diets prescribed by a licensed medical provider shall be provided;

Some children come into care not knowing how to care for themselves. If the child has not developed age-appropriate habits, foster parents provide this instruction and provide appropriate meals. This should be done in an accepting and non-judgmental manner. It is important to understand and accept that children come from different cultures. Other cultures are neither better nor worse. They are simply different. From this perspective, foster parents may instruct children in how things are done in their home without implying criticism of the child's birth parents. If a child has a prescribed diet, foster parents must assure that diet is followed. This may be a point of contention, as it may require preparing separate menus for the child. The child may not like the diet and ask for food not prescribed. The licensing social worker can reduce any confrontation by helping the foster parent understand the importance of the diet, providing some recipes that follow the diet, and suggesting ways to handle a child's request for foods not on the diet.

- (16) Is provided medical care in accordance with the treatment prescribed for the child;

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Children need medical care. Even a healthy child needs a regular check up. Foster parents are expected to have professional medical care available. In addition to professional care, foster parents need to maintain emergency medical supplies in the home. A Red Cross First Aid kit is an effective way to assure a child will get emergency care until professional care is provided.

Some children have special medical needs and foster parents are expected to implement this care, under professional supervision. It is important to review with the foster parent what they will do if the child gets sick, has an accident, or cuts himself. Make sure the foster parents have a Medicaid card for the child or another form of insurance. Make sure the foster family has phone numbers of medical personnel and agency personnel posted and readily accessible. Preparation is a key ingredient to providing necessary medical care.

- (17) Of mandatory school age maintains regular school attendance unless the child has been excused by the authorities;

It is a foster parent's duty to make sure the child gets to school. The child's social worker must make sure the foster parent knows where the school is located and how to get the child to the school. The child's social worker may need to assist the foster parent in registering the child in school. The foster parent should have the names and contact information of the child's teachers. Foster parents need to be responsive to the updates and messages from teachers about the child's progress or school needs. Children frequently need assistance with homework and school projects. The agency, foster parents, and school system must work together to obtain any special educational assistance the child may require.

- (18) Is encouraged to participate in neighborhood and group activities, have friends visit the home and visit in the homes of friends;

Learning to get along with others is a necessary life skill. Foster parents' help children gain this skill by providing opportunities for the child to play and socialize with other children. It is not appropriate for a child to spend all his unscheduled time alone. If a foster family does not live in an area where children can easily engage with others, ask them how they plan to assure that children in their care will have social opportunities. Let foster parents know that the child is permitted to visit their friends' homes, and to have their friends visit the foster home. Children may need to be encouraged to go to parties and celebrations with other children. It is permissible for children to visit in the homes of other families and go to sleepovers as long as the foster parents know the families and have no concerns about safety. It is the responsibility of foster parents to encourage children to develop socially.

- (19) Assumes responsibility for himself/herself and household duties in accordance with his/her age, health, and ability. Household tasks shall not interfere with school, sleep, or study periods;

Developing a sense of community and participation is a major developmental task. Foster parents should show children how to take care of their own room and possessions in accordance with their age, health, and ability. To ask a toddler to clean up in the kitchen is unreasonable; asking a ten-year-old to take his dishes to the sink is reasonable. A reasonable regimen of chores and tasks complements school, study, personal care, recreation, and sleep. A regimen of personal care tasks and

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family chores should help the child fit into the family. Before placement, ask the foster parents what chores they will expect children in their home to undertake. Provide advice to foster parents that assuming personal care tasks, such as: putting dirty clothes in a hamper, putting the cap on the toothpaste, hanging up wet towels, and putting the milk back in the refrigerator helps the child feel part of the family.

(20) Is provided opportunities to participate in recreational activities; Children need recreation to help their minds and bodies grow and develop. Organized recreation develops social skills as well. Foster parents should encourage children to play with other children in the neighborhood, participate in community and afterschool activities, join sports leagues, go to the YMCA or YWCA, etc. Regular family outings, hikes, outdoor adventure sports, and other activities provide excellent recreational opportunities. Foster parents with a more sedentary life style may need help and suggestions on how to fulfill this very necessary part of parenting.

(21) Is not permitted to do any task, which is in violation of child labor laws, or not appropriate for a child of that age;

Foster parents must obey child labor laws. For specific information on this topic, refer foster families to the county department of social services in the community where they live. Foster families that operate a family farm or a family business may need additional guidance with this right. Children are excluded from certain work requirements or tasks that birth children may perform. Before a child in foster care engages in labor for which a person would be paid, encourage the foster parents to discuss this with their supervising agency.

(22) Is provided supervision in accordance with the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and experience; and

Children need to be kept safe yet develop independence and self-reliance. Foster parents must supervise this process. The foster parent is the child's protector. Safety is paramount in deciding how much freedom a child should have. Allowing a toddler to play in the front yard or on a busy street while the parent is in the house is not safe. Allowing a teenager to play unsupervised in the same yard most likely is safe. Using specific scenarios in discussion with the foster parents is an effective way to illustrate the range and limits of appropriate supervision. Do not assume that foster parents who have raised their own children understand that supervising children in foster care may take more attention. Some children have been left on their own in their birth families and feel free to wander off. Older and more mature children may be left alone for short periods of time. However, foster parents need to discuss this and obtain approval from their supervising agency before leaving children alone. Children should never be left unattended if they feel fearful or anxious. Children left alone need to know how to call for help and how to contact their foster parents. Neglect and inadequate supervision kill and injure more children than actual physical abuse.

(23) If less than eight years of age and weighs less than 80 pounds is properly secured in a child passenger restraint system that is approved and installed in a manner authorized by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles;

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All passengers in motor vehicles need to be restrained. In a collision, secondary impact causes serious injury if a person is not restrained by a seat belt. Special car seats keep smaller children safe. Small children (under age of 8 or fewer than 80 pounds) are required by law to be in a special car seat in the back seat. The licensing social worker must make sure that foster parents accept this requirement. Have the foster parent demonstrate to you that they have an appropriate car seat and that they can place the child in the seat correctly.

When applicants sign the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016), they are agreeing they understand these 23 rights and responsibilities, and that they and all household members will comply with them. Signing the DSS-5016 is a good time for a final review of these rules, item by item. Ask all adults in the home if they understand the specific right and agree to enforce the right for each child in care. Spending time at the signing of the DSS-5016 can prevent misunderstanding later on.

(b) Foster parents shall initially and at relicensure sign a Discipline Agreement that specifically acknowledges their agreement as specified in Subparagraphs (a)(9), (10), (11), (12), and (13) of this Rule, as well as discipline requirements outlined in the out-of-home family services agreement or person-centered plan. The foster parents and the supervising agency shall retain copies of these agreements.

Client rights of children are not negotiable. Foster parents are expected to know these rights and make sure they are protected for each child in care. Violation of these rights can result in immediate revocation of the foster home license. These specific rights are listed in the “Discipline Agreement” (this form is developed by the supervising agency) and require the signature of foster parents. These specific issues are:

(a) (9) Provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience, (a)(10) is not subjected to cruel or abusive punishment,

(a) (11) is not subjected to corporal punishment, and

(a) (12) Is not deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving.

The foster parent may use isolation time-out as a behavioral control measure when it is provided within hearing distance of a foster parent. The length of time alone shall be appropriate to the child's age and development.

Review the Discipline Agreement with each foster parent as well as any adult members of the household who will supervise or provide care for a child. Foster parents and any adult household member who provide supervision and care for a child are required to sign the agreement.

When licensing social workers spend time on client rights early in the application process, the rest of the process goes much easier. Many of the applicants' questions and issues are raised and resolved by discussing each of these 23 rights of children in care.

B. 10A NCAC 70E .1102 MEDICATION

Foster parents are responsible for the following regarding medication:

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Many children in foster care need ongoing medical services and supervision. This usually means the child has been prescribed a regimen of medications by a licensed medical provider. Foster parents are the key in making sure the child receives needed medical care and must administer medications in the manner prescribed by the medical provider. It is important that foster parents understand and accept the rules regarding medication administration. These rules are strict and follow precise procedures. This may be very different from a family approach to medication, where strict guidelines are not required. Foster parents will need training in how to administer medications.

The subsections of this rule read:

(1) General requirements:

- (a) Retain the manufacturer's label with expiration dates visible on non-prescription drug containers not dispensed by a pharmacist;*
- (b) Administer prescription drugs to a child only on the written order of a person authorized by law to prescribe drugs;*
- (c) Allow prescription medications to be self-administered by children only when authorized in writing by the child's licensed medical provider;*
- (d) allow non-prescription medications to be administered to a child taking prescription medications only when authorized by the child's licensed medical provider; allow non-prescription medications to be administered to a child not taking prescription medication, with the authorization of the parents, guardian, legal custodian, or licensed medical provider;*
- (e) allow injections to be administered by unlicensed persons who have been trained by a registered nurse, pharmacist, or other person allowed by law to train unlicensed persons to administer injections;*
- (f) Record in a Medication Administration Record (MAR) provided by the supervising agency all drugs administered to each child. The MAR shall include the following: child's name; name, strength, and quantity of the drug; instructions for administering the drug; date and time the drug is administered, discontinued, or returned to the supervising agency or the person legally authorized to remove the child from foster care; name or initials of person administering or returning the drug; child requests for changes or clarifications concerning medications; and child's refusal of any drug; and*
- (g) Follow-up for child requests for changes or clarifications concerning medications with an appointment or consultation with a licensed medical provider.*

Before any medication may be given to a child, it must be authorized by a licensed medical provider (physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner). In addition, before children may take their own medications without supervision, written permission is required from a licensed medical provider. If a

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child is taking a prescribed medication, a licensed medical provider must give written permission for the child to take over-the-counter medicine. Written permission from a parent, guardian, or custodian is sufficient for a foster parent to administer over-the-counter medications to a child not taking prescribed medications. Foster parents are required to be trained in how to administer medications and should receive medication education directly from a pharmacist, registered nurse, or licensed medical provider. Foster parents should be directed to contact the pharmacist or physician for additional information or clarification regarding drug administration if necessary. Foster parents cannot delegate the administration of medications to anyone else.

Any medication given to a child must be recorded immediately on the Medication Administration Record (MAR). The MAR is used to document the date and time that the medication was administered, discontinued, or disposed of. The MAR also contains the following information:

- child's name;
- name, strength, and quantity of the drug;
- instructions for administering the drug;
- date and time the drug is administered, discontinued, or returned to the supervising agency or the person legally authorized to remove the child from foster care;
- name or initials of person administering or returning the drug;
- any medication errors (prescribed and over-the-counter medications) such as missed medications, too little or too much administered, etc.
- child requests for medication changes or clarifications (child's medical provider must be consulted); and
- child's refusal of any drug.

MAR forms are not provided by the Division of Social Services. Therefore, supervising agencies must develop their own MAR forms and insure they contain all the required information.

(2) Medication disposal:

(a) return prescription medications to the supervising agency or person legally authorized to remove the child from foster care; and

(b) return discontinued prescription medications to a pharmacy or the supervising agency for disposal, in accordance with 10A NCAC 70G .0510(c) which states: Upon discharge of a child from foster care, the foster parents or the supervising agency shall return prescription medications to the person or agency legally authorized to remove the child from foster care. Unwanted, out-dated, improperly labeled, damaged, adulterated or discontinued prescription medications shall be returned to a pharmacy for disposal.

Proper disposal of medications is important. Some medications are harmful to the environment. Some are sold on the black market. Some children in foster care intentionally accumulate unused medications so they can be sold on the black market. Each supervising agency must have written procedures for the disposal of unused medications. Make sure your foster parents know about this procedure, have a copy, and know how to follow the steps prescribed.

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When a child is discharged from foster care, medications should go with the child.

Failure to do this can be costly (medications are expensive) and, more seriously, it could deprive a child of needed medication. It is appropriate to release unused medications to the person or agency legally authorized to remove the child from foster care. Foster parents should get a signed statement from the person or agency with the name of the child, name of medications, number of doses remaining, and the date and time the medication was released. This statement should be attached to the MAR.

Provide advice to foster parents that unused or discontinued medications are to be returned to the supervising agency or pharmacy. The foster parent shall make a notation on the MAR the date the medication was returned to the supervising agency or the pharmacy and the name of the pharmacy. If a pharmacy will not accept the medications, the foster parent or supervising agency shall receive information from the pharmacist regarding proper disposal of the medication. The foster parents or supervising agency shall record on the MAR how, when, and where the medications were disposed.

(3) Medication storage:

- (a) store prescription and over-the-counter medications in a locked cabinet in a clean, well-lighted, well-ventilated room other than bathrooms, kitchen, or utility room between 59° F (15° C) and 86° F (30° C);
- (b) store medications in a refrigerator, if required, between 36° F (2° C) and 46° F (8° C). If the refrigerator is used for food items, medications shall be kept in a separate, locked compartment or container within the refrigerator; and
- (c) store prescription medications separately for each child.

Proper medication management means proper storage of medications. Medications are to be kept separate from toiletries, food, household items, etc. Medications are to be kept in a locked container and in a place accessible only to the foster parents. Many foster parents store medications in a closet in the foster parents' bedroom. Make sure the space where medications are stored does not get too cold in the winter or too hot in the summer. Some foster parents keep a thermometer in the space beside the medication storage container.

Medications requiring refrigeration must be kept in a separate locked container. Many foster parents have a small lock box they keep in one of the vegetable crispers in the refrigerator. Inside this box, each child's medications must be stored separately within the lock box and clearly marked. As with medications that do not require refrigeration, temperature monitoring for refrigerated medications is important. Suggest that foster parents keep a thermometer in the refrigerator by the medication storage container.

Some children may be able to self-administer their medications. However, these medications need to be maintained by the foster parent in a locked container.

(4) Psychotropic medication review:

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(a) Arrange for any child receiving psychotropic medications to have his/her drug regimen reviewed by the child's licensed medical provider at least every six months;

(b) Report the findings of the drug regimen review to the supervising agency; and

(c) Document the drug review in the MAR along with any prescribed changes.

Psychotropic medications are powerful drugs capable of altering mood, sensory perception, and physical awareness. The foster parents must follow the specific instructions of the medical provider who prescribed the medication. A licensed medical provider must review the medication regimen of children using psychotropic medications at least every six months. It is the responsibility of the foster parent to make sure this is done. The results of this review are filed with the supervising agency. Usually that means filing the results with the licensing social worker. It is up to the licensing social worker to make sure the review results are filed with the appropriate agency personnel.

The licensing social worker should help the foster parent adopt a vigilant and strict routine with such medications. Ask the foster parent when the review is scheduled. If there is confusion, check with the medical provider. Check with appropriate agency personnel to make sure the report has been received and reviewed by the agency. Check the MAR to make sure the medication is administered as prescribed.

(5) Medication errors:

(a) report drug administration errors or adverse drug reactions to a licensed medical provider or pharmacist; and

(b) document the drug administered and the drug reaction in the MAR.

Foster parents must monitor the child after administering medicine. If the child has any unexpected reaction to the medication, the foster parent must contact the pharmacist or a medical provider immediately. Any medication given incorrectly is to be reported to a pharmacist or a medical provider.

Failing to give a scheduled dose is a medication error. Some medical providers may provide guidance on what to do if a medication is missed. For some medications, missing a dose is not a serious problem; for others, missing a dose may have serious consequences. A licensed medical provider will know when missing a dose of medicine is a serious problem and can provide direction on the steps the foster parent needs to take.

The licensing social worker should make sure the foster parent has a list of key contacts in case a medication is administered in error or if the child has an adverse reaction. Although the rules do not require informing the child's social worker, it is a good idea to do so. Partners keep each other informed and the child's social worker is a key team member for the child.

All medication errors and adverse reactions must be recorded on the Medication Administration Report form (MAR). This is a key document and must be completed accurately and timely. The supervising agency should make a point to review the MAR regularly to insure this record

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provides the necessary information for medical personnel, service and treatment providers, and the Licensing Authority.

The Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016) lists these medication rules verbatim. Licensing social workers should use the time of final signature as an opportunity to reinforce these rules and the procedures they require. Foster parents are expected to practice professional level skills in medication management. Emphasize that the key is thorough, timely documentation. If in doubt, ask for help. Keep everyone informed about medication management issues.

C. 10A NCAC 70E .1103 PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS

Most supervising agencies do not permit foster parents to use physical restraints. Supervising agencies that choose to permit foster parents to use physical restraints must follow all of the rules in 10A NCAC 70E .1103 and 10A NCAC 70G .0512. In these supervising agencies, foster parents must be trained to comply with all these rules and receive annual written authorization to use restraints.

Even when fully authorized and trained, foster parents may only use restraints to prevent children from harming themselves or others. Under no circumstance may restraints be used as a form of discipline or punishment. The use of restraints is for emergency situations only. This rule details some forbidden forms of restraints. They range from mechanical restraints to locking a child in a room. This rule also details the restraint training foster parents are required to have, the qualifications of the trainer, and the foster parent's responsibilities before, during, and after using a restraint. This rule is very specific.

Many agencies provide deescalating training for foster parents, even though they do not permit foster parents to use physical restraints. The online course "Train the Trainer for Becoming a Therapeutic Foster Parent," which can be used to meet the ten-hour pre-service training requirement for therapeutic foster care, provides guidance related to managing behaviors. This training is also appropriate for family foster care. We encourage all supervising agencies to have their foster parent trainers take the course and provide this training to foster parents. This training can be accessed at: <https://www.ncswlearn.org>.

Rule, 10A NCAC 70E .1103 does not trump common sense. Foster parents are expected to use good judgment in caring for children. A three-year-old child playfully running away from a foster parent in a busy parking lot should be held if he does not stop when told to stop. It may even be appropriate to pick him up and put him in the car. It would be inappropriate to do the same thing to a nine-year-old boy. If two seven-year-old boys are fighting and harming each other, pulling the two children apart is the appropriate thing to do. Pulling apart two teen-age girls screaming at each other but not touching each other may not be appropriate. Physical restraints may not be used if a child is damaging property, such as throwing things against a wall, tearing pages from books, or slamming doors with force.

Foster parents who have used force with their own children may feel uncertain concerning their options. They may need reassurance that there are more effective ways to handle children who seem to be out of control. The licensing social worker can calm the foster parents by taking these concerns seriously and arranging for training or assistance in behavior management. This is a good time to reinforce the behavior management lessons covered in the pre-service classes.

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Trained and authorized foster parents need to be judicious in the use of restraints. Supervising agencies must pay careful attention to foster parents who are quick to use restraints. This is usually a sign that foster parents need more supervision and training. Foster parents need to be reminded that restraints are used only as a last resort, never for the convenience of the foster parents, and only to prevent immediate harm to self or others.

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) Foster parents who utilize physical restraint holds shall not engage in discipline or behavior management that includes:

- (1) protective or mechanical restraints;
- (2) drug used as a restraint, except as outlined in Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
- (3) seclusion of a child in a locked room; or
- (4) physical restraint holds except for a child who is at imminent risk of harm to himself/herself or others until the child is calm.

A mechanical restraint is any substance used to restrain a person. Rope, cloth, leather straps, blankets, handcuffs, clothes, duct tape, chains, plastic wrap, string, wire, or any other substance may not be used to restrain a child in foster care. This includes tying or taping items to the child as a form of changing behavior. The licensing social worker needs to impress upon the foster parent that there are no exceptions to this rule.

Drugs or medication may not be used to restrain a child or quell difficult behaviors. Medications may be used as part of a treatment plan to deal with a psychiatric condition and must be prescribed by a licensed medical provider. The supervising agency must help foster parents understand that medications are not used for the convenience of the foster parent. A foster parent caring for a very active child might mistakenly request a medication to help the child calm down so the parents can catch their breath. Such a usage is not allowed. The use of behavior controlling medications must be for aiding the child to meet therapeutic goals for the child's benefit.

A child in foster care may not be placed in a locked room or space. This rule applies even if the foster parents or other individuals are in the locked room. If a child is placed in a room with a door, the child must be able to leave the room if and when he wishes. Some children try to run away from a foster home. Many times foster parents wish to lock the doors so no one can leave. This is not permitted. If foster parents care for children who may run away, they may be asked to install alarms on their doors so they will know the child has left the house. If a child leaves the residence without permission the foster parent should follow the child and encourage him to return to the home. If the child refuses to return to the home the foster parent should continue to follow the child and make sure he remains safe until someone in authority (police, social worker, and therapist) can arrive on the scene.

Foster parents may not hold a child on the floor, in a chair, in a bed, etc. A foster parent may not pull the child by the arm into the house or grab a child by the hair or by the ear. The only time a child may

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be physically restrained is if the child is at imminent risk of harm to himself/herself or others. Only foster parents trained and authorized by the supervising agency may administer physical restraints.

Some foster parents may think this means they may not touch a child. The licensing social worker should help the parent understand the difference between pleasant, desired touch and controlling, punishing touch. If a child is hurt and wants comfort, a foster parent may hug the child for comfort. If the child pushes away and does not want the hug, the child's right to decline the hug is to be respected. To continue to hug a child struggling to get away is not allowed. Discussing this rule is an excellent way to emphasize to new foster parents that most children placed in foster care have behaviors that may be difficult to manage.

- (b) Foster parents shall not administer drugs to a foster child for the purpose of punishment, foster parent convenience, substitution for adequate supervision or for the purpose of restraining the child. A drug used as a restraint means a medication used only to control behavior or to restrict a child's freedom of movement, and is not a standard to treat a psychiatric condition.

Some medications have a calming effect. Tranquilizers and some psychotropic medications place a person in a semi-conscious state. Sometimes foster parents mistakenly request such medications for the child for their own convenience. This use of medication is prohibited.

At times licensed medical providers may prescribe medication to help children focus their attention, cooperate, and concentrate. This is appropriate because it is for the benefit of the child. It becomes inappropriate when the foster parent requests medications for a child for their own convenience and benefit. If a foster parent asks for medications for their convenience, it often is a signal for help. Understanding this may help the agency identify the real reason for this inappropriate request and provide an opportunity to strengthen the placement.

- (c) Before a foster parent shall administer physical restraint holds, each foster parent shall complete training that includes at least 16 hours of initial training in behavior management, including techniques for de-escalating problem behavior, the appropriate use of physical restraint holds, monitoring of vital indicators, and debriefing children and foster parents involved in physical restraint holds. Foster parents authorized to use physical restraint holds shall annually complete at least eight hours of behavior management training including techniques for de-escalating problem behavior. This training shall count toward the training requirements as set forth in 10A NCAC 70E .1117(6). Only foster parents trained in the use of physical restraint holds shall administer physical restraint holds.

Foster parents must be trained to use restraints. The training consists of 16 hours of special instruction. The training course covers the following areas:

- Techniques for deescalating problem behaviors;
- Appropriate use of physical restraint holds;
- Monitoring vital indicators; and
- Debriefing children and foster parents involved in the problem.

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Once foster parents have completed the required 16 hours of instruction, they must complete an additional eight hours of training each year. If foster parents are hesitant to invest time and effort in this training, they should be encouraged to take children who may not need restraints.

An employee of the supervising agency or someone under contract with the agency usually provides this training. These trainers must meet the requirements outlined below. These trainers can be a valuable resource to the licensing social worker. Developing a relationship with these trainers opens up their expertise not only to foster parents who wish to use restraints, but also to all foster parents. De-escalation skills benefit all foster parents. Parents who identify and deal with problems before they require physical confrontation provide a more secure environment for children.

Self-defense instruction, martial arts training, or military/law enforcement experience does not meet this requirement.

- (d) Foster parents shall be trained by instructors who have met the following qualifications and training requirements:
 - (1) instructors shall demonstrate competence by scoring 100 percent on testing in a training program aimed at preventing, reducing, and eliminating the need for restrictive interventions;
 - (2) instructors shall demonstrate competence by scoring 100% on testing in a training program teaching the use of physical restraint;
 - (3) instructors shall demonstrate competence by scoring a passing grade on testing in an instructor training program as determined by the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse;
 - (4) the instructors' training shall be competency-based, and shall include measurable learning objectives, measurable testing (written and by observation of behavior) on those objectives, and measurable methods to determine passing or failing the course;
 - (5) the content of the instructor training shall be approved by the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, and shall include, presentation of understanding the adult learner, methods of teaching content of the course, evaluation of trainee performance and documentation procedures;
 - (6) instructors shall be retrained at least annually and demonstrate competence in the use of physical restraint to the North Carolina Interventions (NCI) Quality Assurance Committee;
 - (7) instructors shall be trained in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR);

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- (8) instructors shall have coached experience in teaching the use of restrictive interventions at least two times with a positive review by the coach, and trainers shall teach a program on the use of physical restraints at least once annually; and
- (9) instructors shall complete a refresher instructor training at least every two years.

Instructors must be certified to conduct the training. Training in self-defense, martial arts, or military/law enforcement techniques does not meet this requirement. This rule articulates the training and qualifications of the trainers for classes in how to use physical restraints. The licensing social worker can use the material in this rule to show a foster parent the quality of training needed to be approved to use restraint holds.

- (e) In administering physical restraints, the following shall apply:
 - (1) foster parents shall use only those physical restraint holds approved by the North Carolina Interventions (NCI) Quality Assurance Committee. Approved physical restraint holds can be found at the following web site: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/providers/trainingandconferences/restraints.htm> (Reviewed Restrictive and Physical Interventions Curricula by Name), which is hereby incorporated by reference including subsequent amendments and editions;
 - (2) before employing a physical restraint hold, the foster parent shall take into consideration the child's medical condition and any medications the child may be taking;
 - (3) no child shall be restrained utilizing a protective or mechanical device;
 - (4) no child or group of children shall be allowed to participate in the physical restraint of another child;
 - (5) physical restraint holds shall:
 - (A) not be used for purposes of discipline or convenience;
 - (B) be used only when there is imminent risk of harm to the child or others and less restrictive approaches have failed;
 - (C) be administered in the least restrictive manner possible to protect the child or others from imminent risk of harm; and
 - (D) end when the child becomes calm.

It is the responsibility of the supervising agency to maintain a list of physical restraint holds that are approved by the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services. The supervising agency shall inform foster parents of these approved physical restraint holds. Foster parents trained and authorized to administer physical restraints may use only these

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holds. Two trained adults must be present to administer a restraint hold. Children may not help with physical restraints. No protective or mechanical devices may be used.

- (6) The foster parent shall:
 - (A) ensure that any physical restraint hold utilized on a child is administered by a trained foster parent with a second trained foster parent or with a second trained adult in attendance. Concurrent with the administration of a physical restraint hold and for a minimum of 15 minutes subsequent to the termination of the hold, a foster parent shall monitor the child's breathing, ascertain the child is verbally responsive and motorically in control, and ensure the child remains conscious without any complaints of pain. The supervising agency may seek a waiver from the licensing authority for a foster parent to administer a physical restraint hold without a second trained adult in attendance, and completion of the waiver request form. The licensing authority shall grant the waiver if it receives written approval from the child's parent, guardian, or custodian that the administering of a physical restraint hold without a second trained person present is acceptable, written approval from the supervising agency that the foster parent is authorized to administer a physical restraint hold without a second trained person present, and documentation that there is approval by the child and a family team and documented in the person-centered plan or out-of-home family services agreement that it is acceptable for the foster parent to administer a physical restraint hold without a second trained person present;
 - (B) immediately terminate the physical restraint hold or adjust the position to ensure that the child's breathing and motor control are not restricted, if at any time during the administration of a physical restraint hold the child complains of being unable to breathe or loses motor control;
 - (C) immediately seek medical attention for the child, if at any time the child appears to be in distress; and
 - (D) conduct an interview with the foster child about the incident following the use of a physical restraint hold.

Physical restraints are administered to help the child to regain composure. Once a child ceases struggling, the hold has accomplished its purpose. Once a child starts talking and negotiating, the hold must stop. It is not a contest of wills to show who is right or wrong. It is not a way to show the child who is in charge. A trained foster parent may engage in an approved hold for no more than 15 minutes. Unless the rule is waived, a second trained adult must be in attendance. If the child appears to be in distress in any way, the hold should stop. If the child expresses any signs of physical distress, the foster parent must seek medical care for the child immediately. If there is not a medical office open, the child should be taken to the emergency room. After the child is calm, the foster parent should conduct an interview or discussion with the child to help the child understand what he did that resulted in a hold being used. A trained foster parent should understand and support these limits. If

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the foster parent has any questions about these limits, contact the trainer and consider requiring the foster parent to repeat the training.

After applying a hold, the foster parent may need guidance and support from the licensing social worker. Applying a hold to a child is an emotional experience. The licensing social worker should visit the home and give the foster parent time to discuss the incident. The social worker for the child should be informed so she may visit the child. Often a joint visit by the child's social worker and the licensing social worker conveys the seriousness of applying a hold and demonstrates the agency's support of the child and foster parents.

The second person requirement is a safeguard against misuse of physical restraints. Waiving this rule requires careful consideration. The licensing authority may waive the rule if the following conditions are met:

- the child's parent, guardian, or custodian agrees;
- the supervising agency provides documentation the hold can be administered without a second trained person present, and
- the child and family team agrees and it is documented in the person-centered plan or out-of-home family services agreement.

To secure a waiver from this rule, send written documentation of these three agreements to the licensing authority on a waiver request form. The licensing social worker should be in communication with the Licensing Authority as she secures these forms and composes the waiver request.

- (7) The supervising agency shall interview the foster parent administering the physical restraint hold about the incident following the use of a physical restraint hold by the supervising agency;
- (8) The supervising agency shall document each incident of a child being subjected to a physical restraint hold on an incident report provided by the licensing authority. The incident report shall include:
 - (A) the child's name, age, height, and weight;
 - (B) the type of hold utilized;
 - (C) the duration of the hold;
 - (D) the trained foster parent administering the hold;
 - (E) the trained foster parent or trained adult witnessing the hold;
 - (F) the less restrictive alternatives that were attempted prior to utilizing physical restraint;

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(G) the child’s behavior that necessitated the use of physical restraint; and

(H) whether the child’s condition necessitated medical attention.

A physical restraint hold is traumatic for the child and the foster parent. The agency must make sure the child and the foster parent are all right. The agency must determine that the hold was done correctly and used appropriately. This requires the licensing social worker and/or the child’s social worker to make an onsite visit as soon as possible. In addition to gathering information for a formal report, a visit allows the social worker to determine that the child, the parent, and the witness have the opportunity to describe what happened and how each person feels about the experience. Once the social worker has assessed the needs of all involved, a report is made to the Licensing Authority.

Physical restraint holds are reported to the Licensing Authority within 72 hours of the hold; the report should be made using the physical restraint form developed by the Licensing Authority.

D. 10A NCAC 70E .1104 CRITERIA FOR THE FAMILY

Foster parents should know about normal child development. They should be physically capable of caring for children. They should also possess the skills necessary to be accurate in administering any medications as well as providing documentation that charts the child's progress. This section of the rules details how an applicant can meet these criteria. The twelve skills listed in this rule are basic skills in working with people. When applied to children in foster care, they create a home environment in which children can heal and thrive.

The licensing social worker should be able to recognize and reinforce these skills in a foster parent applicant. The Licensing Authority requires foster parents to demonstrate each of these skills. The licensing social worker writes a mutual home assessment describing how the applicant has displayed and demonstrated each skill. In addition, the licensing social worker describes the plan for enhancing the skills that have been identified as needing further development.

The language of the twelve skills may be difficult for some applicants to understand. The licensing social worker may have to translate this language so that applicants understand. Foster parent pre-service training covers these twelve skills extensively. Individual family discussions, consultations and home visits are required in order for the licensing social worker to gain insight concerning the applicants’ understanding and demonstration of the twelve skills. Applicants should be able to articulate a basic understanding of each skill and be able to recognize areas where they may need help from the agency.

The subsection of this rule reads:

(a) Foster parents shall be persons whose behaviors, circumstances, and health are conducive to the safety and well-being of children. Foster parents shall be selected on the basis of demonstrating strengths in the skill areas of Subparagraphs (1) through (12) of this Paragraph which permit them to undertake and perform the responsibilities of meeting the needs of children, in providing continuity of care, and in working with the supervising agency. Foster parents shall demonstrate skills in:

(1) assessing individual and family strengths and needs and building on strengths and meeting needs;

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This skill has two components. Identifying your own strengths and needs is the first. Identifying the strengths and needs of another person is the second. Giving a real life example of a strength or need shows that the applicant can assess strengths and needs. Always ask for real life examples. Can the applicant identify another person's skills?

Can the applicant accurately describe his or her own strengths? People who are comfortable with themselves usually have little problem listing strengths.

In discussions with applicants, listen for descriptions of strengths. Open the topic by sharing some of your strengths. Help foster parent applicants list their strengths. Ask the applicants to give examples of when they used certain strengths. As they identify and discuss strengths, inform them that they are practicing the skill of "assessing individual strengths."

Identifying needs is more difficult than listing strengths. We all like to feel competent and capable. To list a need requires admitting we do not have everything necessary. It takes strength to admit a need. Guide the foster parent into this skill by sharing needs that you may have. Once foster parents open up to you, help them understand they are using this skill.

(2) using and developing effective communication;

Foster parents need to communicate with a variety of people. Social workers, school officials, teachers, therapists, and doctors are just a few of the professionals often involved with children in foster care. Foster parents need good listening skills to understand instructions about how to care for the children in their homes. They need good communication skills to ensure their messages about the child are received and understood as intended. Being aware of basic communication skills and demonstrating these skills assures the licensing social worker and the Licensing Authority that foster parents can use this skill.

Listening skills include non-verbal behaviors. The gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make, send strong messages. Effective communication assures that the message sent has been received. This is done by paraphrasing back the message and seeking confirmation. An effective communicator responding to a physician may say, "So Doctor, you want Robbie to get more exercise, take his meds in the evening with food, and get at least eight hours of sleep. Did I get that correct?" A good communicator looks for congruity between verbal and non-verbal messages. If a person is saying he would like peas as he crosses his arms and turns his head from side to side, a good communicator will ask for clarity. The foster parent may do this by asking, "I hear you say 'yes,' but your actions are saying 'no.' Do you really want peas?"

To find out if a person is a good communicator, the licensing social worker should observe the applicant communicating with a variety of people. It is especially important to observe the applicant communicating with children, if possible. If the applicant has not had a lot of experience with children, inquire how they can demonstrate their ability to communicate with children. The explanation will reveal a lot about their communication skills.

(3) identifying the strengths and needs of children placed in the home;

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Foster parents must be able to skillfully assess other people's strengths and needs. Without this skill they cannot help children placed in their home. Most of the time, the child placed in a foster home is a stranger to the foster parents. It is unreasonable to expect a child to describe his strengths and needs to the foster parents. The foster parents have to find this out by observing the child's behavior.

Many foster parents have learned this skill by raising their own children. For applicants who do not have children, inquire about their experiences with children. Ask what they have noticed about nieces and nephews at family gatherings. Suggest that they volunteer with church or social clubs.

Applicants need to have experience with children so they can develop the ability to identify strengths and needs of children at various ages. Once the foster parents have assessed the child's strengths and skills, they are ready to plan how to help the child by using their understanding of the child's strengths and needs.

- (4) building on children's strengths and meeting the needs of children placed in the home;

Each child is unique. Each has strengths, each has needs. Once foster parents identify these strengths and needs, they can work more effectively with the child. We all enjoy using our strengths. We enjoy the sensation of competence and mastery. Providing a child with opportunities to use his strengths helps him develop his sense of self. Some children come into care believing they cannot do anything well. By engaging such children in activities that use strengths, a foster parent can help the child change his self- image.

We all have a need for security, belonging, and social approval. We need to learn to manage our feelings and to engage with others. Whatever the need, it should first be met at home. Some children come into care with deep unmet needs. The foster home provides a place to have needs met. It also is a place where a child can experiment with different behaviors to get needs met. By providing opportunities to meet needs, foster parents help the child develop. This requires planning.

The ability to solve problems and to plan for others is an indication of mastery of this skill. Ask foster parents to think of a time when they identified a child's need. Then ask them what they did. This skill is an action skill; the previous skill (2) is the assessing skill. By describing how they solved problems for a child, or planned experiences for a child, the foster parents reveal the extent to which they have mastered this skill.

- (5) developing partnerships with children placed in the home, parents or the guardians of the children placed in the home, the supervising agency and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency;

Foster parents are part of the child welfare team. Like the licensing social worker, foster parents are expected to work with social workers, therapists, physicians, guardians ad litem, birth parents, teachers, and other school officials. They need good social skills to do this. Experience with children and child welfare is not the only way to gain this skill. Help foster parents describe times they were involved in community events. They may have organized activities at places of employment that required

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working with a wide range of groups. Organizing church events requires this skill. Foster parents are expected to interact successfully in the community.

Foster families are expected to attend child and family team meetings, court, and school meetings on behalf of the child. Ask applicants to describe in detail how they will attend such meetings. This is particularly important if the foster home is a long distance from schools, court or service agencies.

- (6) helping children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and skills to form attachments;

Children in care have suffered the trauma of loss. They have lost daily contact with people they love, such as birth parents, siblings, and extended family. Even if these relationships were abusive or neglectful, the child feels the loss deeply. Some children have lost the relationship with prior foster parents. After continually losing relationships some children learn not to attach to anyone; it just hurts too much. Children in foster care need a place where their losses are recognized and they are helped to grieve. Helping children with grief issues is an important role for foster parents. Foster parents can be taught to use their experience to become more and more expert at helping children with grief. Foster parents, in turn, need help grieving when the child leaves their home.

Foster parents need a firm understanding and appreciation for the stages of normal grieving. It is healthy to go through the stages of grief; problems occur when we get stuck in one of the stages. Recognizing and appreciating the stages of grief helps foster parents better care for children. One model of grieving has five stages: shock/denial; strong feelings (usually anger); bargaining; depression, and acceptance.

Foster parent applicants may not have had to cope with losses involving a child. Ask them to share with you a time they suffered a significant loss. It may have been the loss of a parent or relative. It may have been the loss of a job. Once they share a loss, ask them to describe what helped them when they were in denial, struggling with strong feelings, bargaining, and depression. Ask them when they realized they had finally accepted the loss. Be wary of people who minimize loss. One unhealthy response to loss is to repress the feelings and to pretend it is resolved. If foster parents have serious unresolved grief issues, they are very likely to resurface when a child is experiencing the grief process in their home.

Help foster parents understand that by using their grief experiences, they can help children deal with their grief. Being able to grieve safely increases the likelihood that children will find the courage to bond with other people.

- (7) helping children placed in the home manage their behaviors;

Socialization is the art of changing behavior. We do this to fit into the group. We do this to get what we need. We need security, sustenance and social contact. Parenting can be described as the way we teach our children how to change their behavior to get what they want. To be a foster parent means helping children recognize and change negative behaviors.

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Some people will read this skill as how to discipline a child. It is much more than that. This skill speaks to how the parents will help the child fit into their home, feel safe and begin to thrive. It also speaks to how we teach children about feelings and how to express emotions appropriately.

Every family has rules. Foster parents should be able to identify their own rules and be comfortable telling them to others. How will foster parents inform a child of the rules? How will they correct the child's behavior when he does not follow a rule? How will the parent handle situations when the child expresses strong emotions?

Children coming into care may not have been taught about expressing emotions. Frequently they need help to even identify feelings. They may have been in an environment where they were punished for showing feelings. Foster parents are expected to respond to expressions of feelings and to teach a child to express feelings appropriately.

Explore with applicants how they feel about expressions of strong feelings, especially anger. What are the family rules about showing affection? What does a family member do when disappointed? As applicants share what they would do, ask for examples of when they have done this with children. Describe behaviors from the applicant's actual experience in your mutual home assessment.

For applicants who have not had experience working with children, explore with them situations where they have been successful in teaching others how to manage behaviors. If applicants have had supervisory work experience, ask them to share how they dealt with a worker who was not fitting into the team. If applicants have had leadership roles in community organizations, this experience may provide insight into how applicants help others change their behaviors. It may take intense discussion for applicants to grasp that they have behavior shaping skills that can help children in care. The licensing social worker needs to take the time and effort to help applicants examine and share their abilities and experiences.

- (8) helping children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts.

Each child has a past with people important to him/her. These connections are important. The foster parent is the key to preserving these connections and to helping children forge new ones. Most families have ways of doing this for themselves. Some use life books. Others keep photo albums. Some preserve family letters. All of these items are evidence of being able to do this for a child in care.

There is more to this skill than producing life books. This skill requires the foster parent to reach out and communicate with people important to the child. Foster parents may need to talk with birth parents. They may need to ask for help identifying other family members. In addition to developing documents for children, foster parents give foster children the opportunity to do this for themselves.

Indications of mastery of this skill include the ways that applicants meet this need for their own family. How do they memorialize members of their family? How do they stay in contact with current friends and associates? How can these skills be applied to a child in their care? The answers to these questions will provide information for the licensing social worker to write a viable description of this skill in the mutual home assessment.

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- (9) helping children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity;

Each child comes from somewhere. Each has a cultural and racial identity. Understanding and valuing this identity helps create a positive self-concept. Foster parents help by encouraging children to practice the ways of their “people”.

All families have rituals. Understanding and helping children practice the rituals of their heritage is a valuable and helpful practice. Foster parents are expected to help the child do this.

Ask the applicants how they have helped people of a different heritage honor their traditions. Inquire about important celebrations in their family. Explore how they have honored their cultural and racial background. How the applicants answer these inquiries provides information that may be helpful in writing the mutual home assessment.

- (10) providing a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home, which keeps them free from harm;

Many children entering care have been inadequately supervised. They may be used to exploring and trying new things. Foster parents need to be alert to dangerous temptations for children brought into their home. Foster parents who have raised their own children usually understand this skill very quickly.

Applicants who have not parented before may need help with this. Ask foster parents to describe their kitchen. Ask where they keep knives, power appliances, and food cutting utensils. Ask what family rules apply to the use of such items. By asking the applicants to describe each room of the house in terms of child safety, the licensing social worker can get a good sense of how well the applicants have mastered this skill. Secondhand smoke is also a health issue. Foster parents should be willing to protect children from this hazard.

- (11) assessing the ways in which providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care affects the family; and

Caring for children in foster care changes the foster family. Before receiving a child, a foster family needs to assess how they will change when they take in a stranger. Most families have gone through major changes (e.g., having a baby, moving to a different part of the country, changing routines or habits due to school or job demands) and so they already have this skill. Assessing how a family has dealt with any major change event provides information about how providing foster care will affect the family.

- (12) making an informed decision about whether to provide family foster care or therapeutic foster care.

This skill is about how the family makes decisions. An informed decision is better than one that is uninformed. Unfortunately, some families are comfortable making uninformed decisions. Some

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families make decisions impetuously. Others make decisions in secret. Some families just let events make the decision for them.

Uninformed decision-making usually results in problems and unpleasant consequences. Although this “fixing things later” approach can be exciting and even manageable for some families, it is disastrous for a child in foster care. For the sake of the child an informed decision is best. Supervising agencies must provide prospective foster families with sufficient information about the challenges and expectations of foster parents. Prospective foster families cannot make informed decisions if the information provided by the supervising agency is incomplete.

A family skilled in making informed decisions can describe their process step-by-step. The process includes the opinions and feelings of each member of the family. The decision maker(s) use their assessment skills to determine the strengths and needs of the family and of each family member. An informed decision making process anticipates possible difficulties and proposes ways to handle them. Finally, the process is on-going, continually seeking more information with which to evaluate the decision. An informed decision strives to reduce surprises and problems in the long run.

Most families have made major decisions. Ask the applicants to describe some of the major events in their lives. Ask them to describe their thinking in making the decision. Ask them what they learned from the experience. As they discuss previous decisions, they will provide examples that will indicate whether their decision making process is systematic and informed.

(b) Age. A license may only be issued to persons 21 years of age and older.

This requirement can be verified by any legal document that states the birth date of the applicants. If in doubt, request to see a certified birth certificate. Under rare circumstances, this rule may be waived for the benefit of a child in care. This occurs most often with relative placements. When requesting an age range that the family can foster remember that in addition to providing a safe and nurturing home for a foster child, a foster family is also a model for the child of what a family is and how a parent /child relationship should function. A young foster parent caring for an older child often will have difficulty with the “parental” role. The minimum age difference requested should be ten years. Contact the licensing authority if more guidance is needed with this requirement.

(c) Health. The foster family shall be in good physical and mental health as evidenced by:

Foster parenting is hard work. Foster parents need to be in good health. Foster parents need to be mobile, have physical stamina and possess good range of motion. They also need to be in good mental health so they can cope and care for children in all types of circumstances. The purpose of the following rules is to assure that foster parents have good physical and mental health sufficient to care for children. Medical History Forms (DSS-5017) and Medical Evaluations (DSS-5156) must be completed on all foster parent applicants and all household members. The licensing social worker is required to discuss any medical issues that have been identified from the medical history and the medical evaluation on the DSS-5016. The licensing social worker is also required to explain how these medical issues affect the family’s ability to provide foster care services. The licensing social worker should ask the medical provider for an explanation of anything written on the DSS-5156 that they do not understand.

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- (1) a medical examination completed by a licensed medical provider on each member of the foster home within the last 12 months prior to the initial licensing application date, and biennially thereafter;

This requirement is met and documented with a completed and signed Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156). The form has a place at the top to list the name of the supervising agency. The date the medical provider signs the form at the bottom is important. It must be within 12 months of the application form being submitted to the Licensing Authority. Many families have annual checkups already scheduled and may wish to use that appointment to meet this requirement. Give them ample time to change the dates of these annual exams to save the cost of an extra visit to get this form completed. When a family's health insurance covers only one medical check up a year, it will save the family substantially if they do not have a second visit within a 12-month period.

The Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156) has spaces for medical provider comments on behavioral health issues/mental health diagnoses. This is the place for the physician to enter any concerns about alcohol or substance abuse by any member of the family. The form also asks for the medical provider's professional opinion on the suitability of the family to provide foster care. The medical provider may benefit from the information provided by the family on the Medical History Form (DSS-5017). It is recommended that the family complete this form and take it with them to the physician's visit.

It is very important that the Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156) is completed by a medical provider familiar with the family member. It is not acceptable to request that a medical provider who has no knowledge of the medical history of the family member complete the form. The Licensing Authority will not accept Medical Evaluations that state the form has been completed based on the statements of the foster parents or family member, rather than the physician's knowledge of the family.

- (2) documentation that each adult member of the household has had a TB skin test or chest x-ray prior to initial licensure unless contraindicated by a licensed medical provider. The foster parents' children are required to be tested only if one or more of the parents test positive for TB;

A TB test is required to complete the medical examination. There is space on the Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156) to record the results. If the family's physician does not wish to do the test, it may be done at a County Public Health Department. Each adult member must be tested and be negative for TB. If any adult in the household tests positive on the skin test, all children must be tested also. If someone tests positive on the skin test, a chest x-ray is required to verify that person does not have tuberculosis.

Occasionally an adult will test positive on a TB skin test and has an x-ray already on file. In these cases, a second x-ray is required unless a licensed medical provider states that an additional x-ray would be harmful to the person's health. Such a declaration needs to be in writing and included with the medical forms. The chest x-ray does not have to be repeated when the family is relicensed.

- (3) a medical history form completed on each member of the household at the time of the initial licensing application and on any person who subsequently becomes a member of the household;

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The Medical History Form (DSS-5017) must be completed for all family members. The medical histories need to be thorough and accurate. Please note that foster home licenses can be revoked if family members do not disclose health issues. If a household member checks yes to any of the items on the form, an explanation needs to be made in the space provided on the form. Information recorded by the medical provider on the Medical Evaluation (DSS-5156) also needs to be included on the Medical History Form (DSS-5017).

The Medical History Form (DSS-5017) is a good guide for a discussion about health. If a licensing social worker has any concerns or questions about health, they should be addressed before licensing. It is unfortunate for the child and for the family to discover months into a placement that the rigors of fostering are too much for a family member. In such a discussion, it is recommended that the licensing social worker use leading questions. A leading question is one that presumes a condition exists. Instead of asking, “do you drink cocktails and wine at dinner” the licensing social worker may ask, “How often do you have cocktails or wine with a meal”. If there is a concern with arthritis and mobility issues the licensing social worker may ask, “When your joints hurt while walking, do you ever use a walking stick or a cane”. The information on the Medical History Form (DSS-5017) is important.

- (4) no indication of alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or illegal drug use by a member of the foster family;

The foster home licensing social worker can fulfill this rule by conducting a thorough review of the family history. The licensing social worker must inquire about alcohol and drug use (legal and illegal). Ask the applicants and family members directly about their alcohol consumption and drug use. Explore all charges and convictions for DWI. The licensing social worker will need to ask the applicants and family members if they have ever received treatment related to substance abuse. Review the DSS-5017 and DSS-5156 to determine if the family members or medical providers indicated any substance abuse issues. The findings are documented on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016).

- (5) no indication that a member of the foster family is a perpetrator of domestic violence;

The foster home licensing social worker can fulfill this rule by conducting a thorough family history. The licensing social worker will need to ask the applicants and family members directly if they have ever been involved in domestic violence incidents. Explore all charges and convictions related to domestic violence. If a member of the foster family is a perpetrator of domestic violence, licensure will be denied unless there is a five year have period of time since the last incident and there is compelling evidence that indicates that treatment and rehabilitation have been effective. The findings are then documented on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016). A two level staffing decision and a written recommendation from the agency’s executive director must accompany the request for a license if the applicants or household members have been perpetrators of domestic violence.

- (6) no indication that a member of the foster family has abused, neglected, or exploited a disabled adult;

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The best way to fulfill this rule is by conducting a thorough social history of the adults in the family. The licensing social worker may inquire about how an elderly or disabled person was cared for by the applicants or other household members. A good social history includes a listing of jobs and employment. If any family member worked as a caregiver for adults, gentle probing and inquiry about quality of care can provide sufficient information to determine that there is no indication of abuse, neglect or exploitation of an elderly or disabled person. If a member of the foster family has abused, neglected or exploited a disabled adult licensure will be denied unless there is a five year period of time since the last incident and there is compelling evidence that indicates that treatment and rehabilitation have been effective. The findings are documented on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016). A two level staffing decision and a written recommendation from the agency's executive director must accompany the request for a license if the applicants or household members have abused, neglected or exploited a disabled adult.

(7) no indication that a member of the foster family has been placed on the North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry pursuant to Article 27A; Part 2 of G.S. § 14;

The foster home licensing social worker is required to check the sex offender website (<http://sexoffender.ncdoj.gov/>). This site brings up a message from the attorney general. Clicking on the link 'search the registry' on the left side of the page brings up the page for entering the applicant's name in the 'Offender Search' box. Enter the first and last name. Hit the 'enter' key and the results are displayed. Enter these results on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016). If a member of the foster family is on the North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry licensure will be denied.

(8) no indication that a member of the foster family has been placed on the Health Care Personnel Registry pursuant to G.S. § 131E-256;

The foster home licensing social worker is required to check the Health Care Personnel Registry for each adult member of the family. This is done by accessing the website (<http://www.ncnar.org/nchcpr.html>). On the left side of the Health Registry home page, select "Verify Registry Listings" and then select "Confirmation Numbers" in the list at the center of the page. This brings up a place to enter the social security number(s) to be checked. There is capacity to enter up to twelve numbers. Once all numbers are entered, press the *Enter* key. If any of the social security numbers belong to a person on the registry, that person's information will be displayed. Read the entry to make sure there is no indication of abusing or neglecting someone in his or her care. Enter this information on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016).

If a member of the foster family has been placed on the Health Care Personnel Registry licensure will be denied unless there is a five year period of time since the last incident and there is compelling evidence that indicates that treatment and rehabilitation have been effective. A two level staffing decision and a written recommendation from the agency's executive director must accompany the request for a license if the applicants or household members have been placed on the Health Care Personnel Registry.

(9) no indication that a member of the foster family has been found to have abused or neglected a child or has been a respondent in a juvenile court

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preceding that resulted in the removal of a child or has had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child.

The foster home licensing social worker can comply with this rule by conducting a thorough family history interview. The licensing social worker must inquire about all children the applicants or household members have parented or if they have ever been employed in a setting serving children (residential child-care, daycare etc.). The licensing social worker will need to ask the applicants directly if they have ever had any involvement with child protective services or have been part of juvenile court proceedings involving issues related to abuse or neglect of children. The findings are documented on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016).

If there are incidents where a member of a foster family has abused or neglected a child or has been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the removal of a child or has had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child the foster home licensing worker needs to discuss this with the Licensing Authority.

(d) Education. Foster parent applicants shall have graduated from high school or received a GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) or shall have an ability to read and write as evidenced by their ability to administer medications as prescribed by a licensed medical provider, maintain medication administration logs and maintain progress notes.

Foster parents must be able to read and write. They have to record medications as required for the Medication Administration Record (MAR). They must write notes on a child's progress. They represent the child with schools and community agencies and must understand written information.

An applicant who has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED) is presumed to be able to read and write sufficiently to do these tasks. The licensing social worker verifies this by viewing the diploma or the GED certificate. Applicants who do not have a diploma or GED must demonstrate that they can read and write.

The licensing social worker easily can determine whether an applicant has these necessary minimum literary skills. Make it a standard part of the required home visits to have each responsible adult demonstrate how to make entries on a MAR. Give each person written instructions on medication administration from a pharmacist. Ask that person to tell you how to administer a medication. Ask each person to read and explain a typical letter from a school system informing the parent of appeal rights of a school decision. By incorporating these simple tasks into a standard interview at a required home visit, the licensing social worker can gather evidence that the applicants have these required minimum skills of literacy.

If the foster parent applicant does not have a high school diploma or GED, record fully in the agency's record how you know he or she can read and write. Be specific and detailed so there is a clear understanding the applicant can manage a MAR, make case notes and read letters and documents from professionals.

(e) Required Applicants. Foster parent applicants who are married are presumed to be co-parents in the same household and both shall complete all licensing requirements. Adults 21 years of age or older, living in currently licensed or newly licensed foster homes who have responsibility for the care,

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supervision, or discipline of the foster child shall complete all licensing requirements. The supervising agency shall assess each adult's responsibility for the care, supervision, or discipline of the foster child.

The licensing social worker must carefully assess relationships in the family and the role of any household member who is 21 years of age or older, related to parenting foster children. Married couples and unmarried couples are considered co-parents and must meet all licensing requirements. Boyfriends and girlfriends of single applicants must also be a part of the assessment process. Live-in boyfriends and girlfriends are considered foster parent applicants and must meet all licensing requirements. Boyfriends and girlfriends of applicants who visit the home of the applicant and have contact with foster children are considered other household members and must meet the licensing requirement for other household members. This includes all criminal history and background checks (local court record, NC Department of Corrections Offender Information, NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry, Health Care Personnel Registry), fingerprint checks, RIL checks, and medical requirements (DSS-5156 and DSS-5017). These individuals shall sign statements that certify: (1) they are not perpetrators of domestic violence; (2) they have not abused, neglected or exploited a disabled adult; (3) they have not abused or neglected a child or have been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the removal of a child or have had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child. These individuals shall also sign a discipline agreement indicating they will not use corporal punishment as a means of disciplining foster children. These signed statements are maintained in the supervising agency's foster home licensing record.

Relatives, friends or other individuals who are 21 years of age or older, living in the home full time, must be thoroughly assessed to determine if they are providing care, supervision and discipline of foster children on an ongoing basis. If they are providing care, supervision and discipline on an ongoing basis they must meet all licensing requirements. If they occasionally assist foster parents with the care, supervision and discipline of foster children they should be considered as other household members. Adults who are considered other household members must meet all criminal history and background checks (local court record, NC Department of Corrections Offender Information, NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry, Health Care Personnel Registry), fingerprint checks, RIL checks, and medical requirements (DSS-5156 and DSS-5017). These individuals shall sign statements that certify: (1) they are not perpetrators of domestic violence; (2) they have not abused, neglected or exploited a disabled adult; (3) they have not abused or neglected a child or have been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the removal of a child or have had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child. These individuals must also sign a discipline agreement indicating they will not use corporal punishment as a means of disciplining foster children. These signed statements are maintained in the supervising agency's foster home licensing record.

When a spouse is out of the home for extended periods of time, such as a member of the armed services who is deployed, the licensing social worker may request (of the Licensing Authority) that consideration be given to listing this spouse as a household member rather than a foster parent until he/she returns. When such approval is granted the spouse must immediately begin the process to license when he/she returns to the home. If a household member is living in the foster home because they need care themselves, this should be explained in the cover memo.

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The agency/foster parent agreement addresses the requirement of notifying the supervising agency when someone moves into or out of the home. The supervising agency in turn should notify the Licensing Authority by means of submitting a Foster Home Change Request Application (DSS-5159) indicating this. When the family has someone who is a frequent guest in the home they should discuss this occurrence with the supervising agency. The licensing social worker should discuss in pre-service training and throughout the process that single foster parents should make the supervising agency aware of people who are in frequent contact with foster children. Background checks should be done on dating partners who are in the home and in contact with foster children on a regular basis whether or not they spend the night in the home. Licensing social workers should have open and honest discussions with applicants and single foster parents who may want to date different people and help them to assess whether the timing is right for them to foster.

The supervising agency must include anyone 18 years of age or older in the home on the DSS-5016 and provide the following documents on them: fingerprint clearance letters, local background checks (local court record, NC Department of Corrections Offender Information, NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry, Health Care Personnel Registry), RIL checks (DSS-5268), physicals (DSS-5156) medical histories (DSS-5017). The supervising agency must add their names to the DSS-5015 as a household member. These individuals shall sign statements that certify: (1) they are not perpetrators of domestic violence; (2) they have not abused, neglected or exploited a disabled adult; (3) they have not abused or neglected a child or have been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the removal of a child or have had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child. These signed statements are maintained in the supervising agency's foster home licensing record.

Foster parents must receive approval from their supervising agency before moving anyone into their home. Foster parents need to understand that moving individuals into their home without the approval of their supervising agency can result in the revocation of their foster home license. Supervising agencies may give approval for children to move into the home if the following conditions are met: (1) there is adequate space for the additional children; (2) the additional children will not put the foster home over capacity; (3) a 5017 is completed on the children; (4) a 5156 is completed on the children; (5) an assessment is made that the foster parents have the ability and stamina to care for additional children. Supervising agencies may give approval for adults to move into the home if the following conditions are met: (1) there is adequate space for these individuals without compromising the space of foster children; (2) all the requirements for a household member have been completed (see next paragraph for these requirements).

If someone 18 years of age or older is given approval to move into the home or if someone in the home turns 18 they must be added to the DSS-5015 and a change request (DSS-5159) must be submitted on them. This change request must be accompanied by the same documents mentioned for an initial application {fingerprint clearance letters, local background checks (local court record, NC Department of Corrections Offender Information, NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry, Health Care Personnel Registry), RIL checks (DSS-5268), physicals (DSS-5156), medical histories (DSS-5017)}. These individuals shall sign statements that certify: (1) they are not perpetrators of domestic violence; (2) they have not abused, neglected or exploited a disabled adult; (3) they have not abused or neglected a child or have been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the removal of a child or have had child protective

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services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child. These signed statements are maintained in the supervising agency's foster home licensing record.

Foster parents are responsible for the care, supervision, discipline and safety of foster children placed in their homes. Foster parents must have the ability to make judgments and critical decisions concerning the appropriateness and safety of other individuals who come into contact with foster children. This includes relatives, friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, neighbors, babysitters, visitors, etc. Supervising agencies are responsible for selecting foster parents who are capable of making these judgments and critical decisions.

E. 10A NCAC 70E .1105 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Rules are only as effective as the integrity of the people implementing them. Fair, equal, and accurate administration of rules increases compliance and support of rules. Local administration of Foster Home Licensing rules must be beyond suspicion and beyond appearance of conflict of interest.

Avoiding conflicts of interest protects the foster parent as well as supervising agency staff. Making licensing decisions on the families of agency board members or county commissioners can be tense and uncomfortable. As careful as a licensing social worker may be, there always will be suspicions of preferential treatment.

The following rules strictly define conflict of interest situations an agency must avoid. If any of the listed members wish to be foster parents, they will need to pursue this goal with another supervising agency.

- (a) County departments of social services and private child-placing agencies shall not supervise foster homes of members of their board of directors, governance structure, social services board, and county commission.

Members of boards of directors, social services boards, and county boards of commissioners have power and authority over the head of the supervising agency. These boards also control approval of the budget. If any member of any of these boards wishes to be licensed as a foster home, he or she should be referred to another department of social services or another licensed child-placing agency approved to supervise foster homes. Once the referral is made, the licensing social worker should have no more involvement in the matter.

- (b) County departments of social services and private child-placing agencies shall not supervise foster homes of agency employees and relatives of agency employees. Relatives include birth and adoptive parents, blood and half blood relative and adoptive relative including brother, sister grandparent, great- grandparent, great-great grandparent, uncle, aunt, great-uncle, great-aunt, great- great uncle, great-great aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin, stepparent, stepbrother, stepsister and the spouse of each of these relatives.

Supervising agency employees may not be foster parents for their agency. This prohibition extends to employee's family and extended family members. Agency employees and their family members who

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wish to be licensed as foster parents should be referred to another county department of social services or another licensed child-placing agency approved to supervise foster homes. Once the referral is made, the licensing social worker should have no more involvement in the matter.

- (c) Private child-placing agencies shall not supervise foster homes of their agency owners.

Owners of private child-placing agencies may not be licensed as foster parents by their own agency. Agency owners who wish to become foster parents should be referred to a county department of social services or another licensed child-placing agency approved to supervise foster homes. Once the referral is made, the licensing social worker should have no more involvement in the matter.

A licensing social worker may anticipate conflicts of interest before they occur. If the agency or the owner does not have a written policy on how to handle applicants who have a conflict of interest with the agency, it is good practice for the licensing social worker to recommend that such a policy be written and adopted. Such a policy helps the licensing social worker and the agency as a whole by reducing confusion and delays when conflicting situations occur.

F. 10A NCAC 70E .1106 DAYCARE CENTER OPERATIONS

Foster parents may wish to provide child day care services in addition to foster care. This is allowed, within limits. The purpose of foster care is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for a child in care. Providing child day care must not conflict with this purpose.

In-home day care is an arrangement in which the day care provider uses her home to care for children. In-home daycare is permitted in family foster homes. However the capacity of the in-home daycare (number specified on the in-home daycare license) must be counted in the total capacity for the foster home. Therapeutic foster parents are not allowed to provide in-home daycare.

Some homes have attached rooms that are used exclusively for child day care and are separate from the living quarters of the home. Under certain conditions, this type of child care operation is allowed. Some day care centers operate in a free standing building separate from the foster parent's house. Within certain limits, foster parents may operate free standing day care centers.

The overall principle is that day care operations may not impinge on children in foster care. The following rules apply to all types of child day care.

The subsections of this rule read:

- (1) the foster home living quarters shall not be part of the day care operation;

No part of the foster home space may be used for child day care operations. Children served by the day care center may not have access to the spaces set aside for the family and the child in foster care. This means that the day care must be able to operate independently of the foster home. The day care center must have its own toilet facilities, water, cooking appliances, clean up equipment, refrigeration,

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and communications ability. The playground must be separate from the outside areas of the home used by the family. If there is a door in the day care area accessing the foster family living area, it must be secure so that no day care client or staff may inadvertently leave the day care area and go into the family living area. It is recommended that such a door be locked.

Foster parents who wish to operate a day care in a space attached to their home may need guidance in understanding the degree of separation intended by this rule. Ask the applicants to imagine that their living space suddenly disappeared. Could the day care operation continue uninterrupted? If not, then the day care operation does not meet the requirement of this rule.

(2) there shall be a separate entrance to the day care operation; and

The day care operation can be accessed only from the outside of the foster home. This rule assures that no part of the foster home living quarters is used for child day care purposes. This rule also encourages foster parents to be aware that the day care is a separate operation. By having a separate entrance, the delineation between the day care realm and the foster home realm are clearly marked.

(3) staff specified in day care center rules shall be available to provide care for the day care children.

Foster parents who work providing day care must be very clear when they are working in the day care operation and when they are at home available to children in foster care. The foster parent may not fulfill both roles simultaneously. If the foster parent leaves the day care operation, the foster parent is considered unavailable to the children in day care. If the foster parent is on duty in the day care center, then that foster parent is unavailable to the child in foster care. When the foster parent is working in the day care, some other qualified member of the family must be in the home to supervise the child in foster care.

To help foster parents understand what this rule requires, a licensing social worker might ask the foster parent working in a day care operation attached to the home or in a separate center on the property to imagine that the foster home is a 15-minute drive from the day care center.

When a foster parent also operates a day care, it is recommended that the foster parent keep detailed time records listing when acting as a day care worker and when acting as a foster parent. During times when the foster parent is a day care worker, it is important that someone else supervise the children in the home.

G. 10A NCAC 70E .1107 RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUPERVISING AGENCY

Successful foster families develop and maintain a close working relationship with the supervising agency. Children placed in such homes are more likely to experience successful placements and successful lives. The way licensing social workers handle the licensing process sets the tone for the relationship. The following principles of partnership are good guides for the licensing social worker to follow as they develop a productive relationship with foster families:

1. Everyone desires respect

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2. Everyone wants to be heard
3. Everyone has strengths
4. Judgments can wait
5. Partners share power
6. Partnership is a process

Foster parents deserve respect. An effective way to show respect is to listen. Instead of beginning a session with a foster family with a long list of items to cover, the effective licensing social worker slows down, asks open-ended questions, and encourages family members to talk. Giving time and attention shows respect.

Respect also acknowledges strengths. Licensing social workers gain cooperation from foster families by recognizing what has been done well and what the family has accomplished with the child. Likewise, recognizing families for the effort they have made to become licensed increases their willingness to actively contribute to the licensing and relicensing processes.

Partners do not judge each other. Partners share concerns and ask each other for help. Keeping an open mind and identifying strengths is more motivating than listing failures and things undone.

Sharing power with partners starts with sharing information. Partners trust each other. The licensing social worker shares power by sharing the difficulties as well as the successes of fostering. Partners do not try to protect each other from harsh realities, but share information so each can be prepared. The training of potential foster parents should include honest and candid discussions about behaviors that they may encounter with children in care. This conveys respect for the foster parents and their ability to make informed decisions.

Building a partnership takes time and requires time, attention, and faith. Yet it is well worth the effort. Modeling true partnership with foster parents gives them a clear example to follow as they work with other providers and the families of children in care.

This rule specifies certain areas where partnership is imperative.

- (a) Foster parents shall agree to work with the supervising agency in the following ways:
- (1) work with the child and the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) in the placement process, reunification process, adoption process, or any change of placement process;

Children should not grow up in foster care. The goal for every child in care is permanency, either through reunification with his birth family or through adoption. Foster parents are expected to work with a wide range of people in pursuit of these goals, including Departments of Social Services social workers, mental health professionals, medical providers, and others. In many cases, the foster parents will work with guardians ad litem (GAL). These trained agents of the court check up on

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children and make recommendations to the court on their behalf. Encourage foster parents to get to know their children's GALs and to cooperate with them.

Foster families are part of the professional team serving children in foster care and their families. They are expected to help implement the plan of care for the child, even if they have mixed feelings about the goal.

For many children in care, the Juvenile Court oversees the placement and approves the plan of care. The court reviews the plan on a periodic basis. Foster parents have a right to be notified of court proceedings and should be encouraged to attend. Many foster families have a hard time when the court orders children to return to their birth families.

At these times, foster families may benefit from a visit from their licensing social worker. Feelings may be raw and the family may need a friendly person to listen and empathize.

- (2) consult with social workers, mental health personnel, licensed medical providers, and other persons authorized by the child's parent(s), guardian(s) or custodian who are involved with the child;

Successful foster parents use a variety of professionals as consultants. As a member of a professional team trying to reunite the child with his family, the successful foster parent seeks out advice and guidance. As a team member, the foster parents work to keep all members informed and up to date about the child's progress.

- (3) maintain confidentiality regarding children and their parent(s) or guardian(s);

Although many parents enjoy sharing information about their children, foster parents may share information about children in foster care only with people involved in the child's plan of care. Foster parents need help learning the limits and range of this restriction.

Families often find it helpful to develop scripts for use in conversation. For example, if a friend of the foster family asks whether the child was abused or neglected an appropriate scripted reply may be to say, "Many children in care have been abused or neglected. Suffice it to say that this child has had some difficult experiences. Of course, I am not at liberty to share details. I know you understand."

Some foster parents may be so conscientious that they will not tell anyone anything about the child. Foster parents may need guidance on what to share with school, medical, and with mental health personnel. Make sure your foster families feel free to seek guidance on this issue.

- (4) keep records regarding the child's illnesses, behaviors, social needs, educational needs, and family visits and contacts; and report to the supervising agency any changes as required by 10A NCAC 70E .0902

(Agency Foster Parents' Agreement)

Maintaining accurate records enhances communication and cooperation among team members. Effective foster parents keep good records. In addition to illnesses, behaviors, needs and family

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contacts, foster parents should be encouraged to record strengths and accomplishments. The licensing social worker can aid in this task by providing a variety of examples and materials on record keeping. From simple check sheets to sophisticated automated computer logs, any aid given to the foster parent helps. Take time to help the foster family set up a record keeping system. Help them ensure record confidentiality. Show them how to record when information is shared with other team members. Record keeping is a great way to show the child's progress and foster parent efforts. When visiting in the home, licensing social workers should review the record keeping. This is a quick and effective way to reinforce foster parent record keeping efforts.

(5) report to the supervising agency any changes as required by 10A NCAC 70E.0902

Foster parents are required to report any changes in the household situation such as address, employment, and household composition. Changes in family status such as a significant change in financial resources or loss of employment must be reported. The family must keep the supervising agency informed of any major family events such as a marriage, death or pregnancy of a family member. The family must inform the supervising agency if a household member is charged with or convicted of a crime while they are licensed. They must inform the agency if someone in the family suffers a serious physical illness or a mental illness, including the deterioration from a known physical or mental health condition. Foster parents must report this information to their supervising agency within 72 hours of the occurrence. The supervising agency must report this information to the Licensing Authority on the Foster Home Change Request Application (DSS-5159) within five business days.

The foster parents must inform the agency any time a significant event occurs involving the child in their care. The agency needs to know if the child suffers any accidents, illnesses, major health crises, or trips to the hospital or medical providers. In addition, encourage foster parents to keep the agency informed about any of the child's major accomplishments. By encouraging the family to report accomplishments, you provide evidence of strengths upon which to build the therapeutic relationship.

Help the foster family set up procedures for reporting. The easier the reporting process, the more likely it is to be used. Inform the family of agency protocols about leaving confidential messages. Encrypt e-mails to guard against accidental breaches of confidentiality. Establish strict safeguards before using text messaging and tweeting. By making reporting easy and routine, the foster family is acknowledged as a vital member of the agency treatment process.

(b) In addition to Subparagraphs (a)(1) through (5) of this Rule, foster parents who provide therapeutic foster care services shall:

- (1) be trained as set out in 10A NCAC 70E .1117; and
- (2) allow weekly supervision and support from a qualified professional as defined in 10A NCAC 27G .0104 and 10A NCAC 27G .0203.

The major difference between a family foster home and a therapeutic foster home is the needs of the children placed in the home. Children who need therapeutic care have severe emotional and psychological needs that require intensive supervision and intervention by the foster parents. Often this level of care requires someone to be with the child all the time.

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Therapeutic foster parents must meet all the requirements to be licensed as a family foster home. In addition, they must complete ten hours of training in behavioral mental health treatment services before they may be licensed. These requirements are outlined in 10A NCAC 70E .1117.

Therapeutic foster parents must agree to a minimum of 60 minutes of weekly supervision and support by a qualified professional for each foster child placed in their home. During these visits the qualified professional meets with each foster parent and reviews the progress of the child's treatment, reviews the foster parent's performance, and provides support, guidance, and training to the foster parents. At a minimum sixty percent (60%) of the weekly supervision sessions for each therapeutic foster child placed in the foster home shall be face-to-face contacts with each foster parent. At a minimum the required supervision sessions shall take place twice per month in the foster home.

Some family foster parents ask why they are not licensed at the therapeutic level. Such inquiries often come after a crisis with a child or after a period of difficulty. Licensing social workers can respond to this question by reviewing these additional requirements; if appropriate, point out that the child currently in the family foster care parents' home does not require intensive, therapeutic care on an ongoing basis. In addition, review capacity rules with the family, pointing out that while family foster homes may provide care for up to five children if there are no other children in the home, therapeutic foster homes may provide care for only two children who require intensive therapeutic care. It is a good idea to address the distinction between family and therapeutic foster care during pre-service training.

H. 10A NCAC 70E .1108 FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY

For a foster family, the local fire inspector is the authority on home and child safety. Foster families are expected to maintain the house and its attached buildings in the same safe condition as when the house was built. If the licensing social worker has any doubt about the safety of an item or condition of the home, he or she should consult the building codes in force when the house was built. Local county building inspectors are a good resource for such inquiries.

If a local fire inspector checks no to any questions on the Fire Inspection Report (DSS- 1515) the Licensing Authority will not license the home until the fire inspector documents that the situation has been corrected. Even when items are marked yes, any suggestions for corrections made by the fire inspector must be addressed in order for the Licensing Authority to approve the license.

An effective licensing social worker establishes a good working relationship with the local fire inspectors. They inspect foster homes as a courtesy; it is an extra duty over and above their regular fire fighting duties. Help the foster parent prepare for the visit. Make sure the foster parent is home for the inspection. It is also a good idea for the licensing social worker to be present during the inspection. Some fire inspectors train licensing social workers to prepare the home for the official visit. At a minimum, licensing social workers need to be proficient in the eight areas of the Fire Inspection Report (DSS-1515).

The subsections of this rule read:

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(a) *Each foster home shall be in compliance with all applicable portions of the NC Residential Code in effect at the time the foster home was constructed or last renovated. Information regarding the purchase of all applicable volumes of The North Carolina State Residential Code and referenced standards and codes, can be accessed by reviewing the following web site: (<http://www.ncdoi.com> - select "Code Services", and the select "Code Book Sales") or calling the Code Section within the Department of Insurance at 919-661-5880.*

This rule requires the home to meet building codes at the time of construction. If the licensing social worker notices something out of order, refer to the building code in force when the home was built. Seek help from the local county building inspectors' office or review the website above or contact the Department of Insurance at 919-661-5880.

(b) All homes shall be protected from all fire hazards including the following:
(1) all hallways, doorways, entrances, ramps, steps, and corridors shall be kept clear and unobstructed at all times;

This usually means that there is at least 36 inches of clear corridor space. It is best that all hallways, doorways, entrances, ramps, stairs, and corridors are kept clear. This may be a problem with houses that have a small room at the back door of the house. These 'mud rooms' tend to get cluttered over time. Walk through the house to make sure all walkways are clear.

(2) an evacuation plan shall be developed, and all persons in the home shall be knowledgeable of the plan;

This plan describes what to do in case of fire or emergency evacuation. It should cover each room of the house. Ideally, there will be at least two ways to exit the house from every room. If windows are used, the plan should describe how to open and get out of the window. The plan should describe how to use special fire ladders or steps if necessary. As the licensing social worker helps the family develop this plan, it is helpful to review or develop rules of the house. Since each room must be included in the plan, ask the family what rules apply to the rooms. The evacuation plan should include a diagram that shows how to exit the house; this diagram must be posted where each family member can see it.

(3) a mounted "ABC" fire extinguisher with a rating not less than 1-A shall be installed and readily available in the residence;

Every house should have a fire extinguisher available for emergencies. Make a list of stores in the area that carry fire extinguishers. Set a date with the family to inspect the installation of the extinguisher; this inspection is a good time to review the evacuation plan to ensure everyone knows when and how to use the extinguisher and when and how to vacate the house.

(4) homes built prior to July 1975 shall have a battery or electric smoke alarm installed outside every sleeping area. Homes built between July 1975 and June 30, 1999, shall have electric smoke alarms placed outside sleeping areas as required by the NC Residential Code in effect at construction time. Homes built

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after June 30, 1999 shall have smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside bedrooms and other areas, interconnected as required in the NC Residential Code;

No home can be licensed unless it has operating smoke alarms near or in the bedrooms. If the home has battery-powered alarms, ask when the family checks the batteries. If they wait until the alarm beeps due to low battery, ask to see where the spares are stored.

- (5) a Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector shall be installed in homes that use fuel oil products, coal, wood or gas to heat, cool, cook, operate a hot water heater or gas logs;

Only all-electric homes do not need a carbon monoxide detector. Make sure the family understands that CO has no smell and is invisible. Press the appropriate button on the carbon monoxide detector to ensure it is functioning properly.

- (6) all homes shall have telephone service;

With children in foster care, it is imperative to be able to call for assistance at all times. A telephone is a necessity for a foster family, not merely a convenience. The safest, most reliable phone is a landline phone. Such phones work when the electric power goes out. If the family uses an internet or computer-based phone, inquire about backup batteries. If the family uses cell phones for emergency communication, ask the family to show you the charger and to explain where they will charge the phone if the power is out. Cell phones usually are in the possession of one person and go with that person when they leave the home. A working phone must be available and accessible (everyone knows where it is) to everyone in the home. The phone should be in a place where it can be located easily in an emergency.

- (7) no egress door shall have a double keyed dead bolt; and

For fire safety reasons, all doors designated, as an exit to the outside must be able to be opened without using a key. This rule does not prohibit deadbolts; deadbolts are great security and recommended. However, if the family has a deadbolt on a designated exit door with a key lock on the inside, it must be changed to a thumb latch. The door must be able to be opened from the inside without the key.

- (8) extension cords shall not be used as a substitute for permanent wiring.
Extension cords shall be used only for portable appliances and shall be listed by Underwriters Laboratory (UL).

Electricity can cause a fire. Trying to draw too much current through a small wire causes the wire to heat up and catch things on fire. Extension cords are not designed to carry a lot of current. Using extension cords for permanent wiring is hazardous. If extension cords are being used, ask the family where the appliance is stored when not in use. Coffee pots, space heaters, and other appliances that produce heat pull a lot of current. These items should never be used with extension cords. Sometimes electronic devices such as computers, printers, monitors, and televisions are plugged into the same

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wall outlet. This can overload the wiring in the wall and cause a fire. A safer alternative is a power strip with a built-in fuse or circuit breaker. When in doubt about the safety of wiring, ask the fire marshal.

Additionally this rule states:

Before a home is licensed, it shall be inspected and receive a passing rating on the fire and building safety inspection report completed by the local fire inspector. Before a home is relicensed, it shall have a current fire and building safety inspection report with a passing rating completed by the local fire inspector.

A local fire inspector must inspect a foster home prior to initial licensing and at relicensure. The licensing social worker is responsible for fire and safety oversight; visiting the home at least twice per year. One important activity to perform during these visits is a safety inspection to ensure these eight requirements are being met.

I. 10A NCAC 70E .1109 HEALTH REGULATIONS

This rule pertains to basic home sanitation. It requires specific visits, conversations, and documents on this subject. These visits and conversations must occur before sending off the packet of materials recommending that the home be licensed. Unless the licensing social worker is satisfied that there is clean running water and sanitary toilet and bathing facilities inside the house, the home should not be recommended for licensure.

To comply with this rule, the foster home licensing social worker must observe the home. The worker should see the water running from the tap. If the worker has doubts about drinking the water coming from the tap, the home should not be recommended for licensing. The worker should flush the toilet to verify that it functions properly. The worker should see the bathing area, turn on the water, and ensure the drain works.

Licensing social workers should document their observations about the basic sanitation of the foster home using the Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report (DSS-5150). Item 11 on the form provides a place to document that these conversations and observations have taken place. Further documentation, if applicable, should be added on the back of the form. It is recommended that the worker document exactly how the foster parent was asked about water quality, health hazards, and testing. The Licensing Authority relies solely on the professional observation and judgment of the licensing social worker to assure that children in foster care have safe water and sanitary toilet and bathing facilities.

This rule reads as follows:

The supervising agency shall have a discussion regarding water quality and sanitation with the applicants. The supervising agency shall document the date the discussion was held and include a statement that the family is not aware of any health hazards caused by the family's water and sanitation facilities. The supervising agency shall ask the family about water testing that has been done and any immediate or past problems concerning water quality and sanitation. As part of the on-

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site visit, the supervising agency shall observe that the home has running water. As part of the on-site visit, the supervising agency shall observe that the home has a sanitary toilet and bathing facility. Licensure of a foster home shall not be recommended if the supervising agency has any reason to believe the water supply is not safe or the toilet and bathing facilities are not sanitary.

It is important to ask the foster parents about the quality of their water supply and sanitation facilities. Even homes in prosperous suburban neighborhoods have water and sewer problems. Ask specifically if the applicants have ever had any concerns about health hazards caused by water and sanitation facilities. Ask the applicants if they drink the tap water. Ask for a glass of water. If you have any hesitation about drinking it, the home is not acceptable for children in care. Ask the family if they have ever had their water tested. If they have, ask for their reasons. Ask about the findings of the testing. Consider checking with the county health department about water concerns in the neighborhood.

Personally view the bathing and toilet areas. This should already have been checked by the building inspector to make sure the space is properly vented. Flush the toilet. Turn on the water in the washbasin. Turn on the water in the bathing area. The water should drain faster than the water comes out of the tap. If the water builds up in the basin, the drains need to be cleaned.

Be specific in documenting this item. Document the date of the conversation on the DSS-5150; write the questions asked and the answers received on the back of the form. As the person responsible for assuring that the children in care have safe water and sanitary toilet and bathing facilities, the licensing social worker must sign this document.

J. 10A NCAC 70E .1110 ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

The primary goal of environmental regulations is to ensure the environment is as safe as possible for children. These are minimum standards that must be complied with strictly at all times. Ensure the family understands that these regulations are ongoing and they are expected to maintain the home at this level. Compliance with this rule is recorded on the Environmental Conditions Report (DSS-5150). The licensing social worker signs this form as evidence that each item has been checked and addressed. The applicants also sign this form, verifying that they understand and agree to comply with each item. It also is a good time to recheck items listed on the Fire Inspection Report (DSS-1515). Use the time to review what the applicants can expect when an unfamiliar child comes to live in their home.

The subsections of this rule read:

(a) The home and yard shall be maintained and repaired so that they are not hazardous to the children in care.

The licensing social worker should go through the entire house with an eye for what may injure a child. In the kitchen, open cabinets and drawers. Note how sharp items such as knives and slicers are stored. Determine if cleaning materials are stored in a safe and secure place. Ask about pest control. How does the family keep the kitchen free of ants and mice?

Inspect the living area for potential hazards, including decorations. Ask whether it is permissible to touch and handle items on display. If not, ask how they will inform children of the rules. Is there a desk

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or family office? Are there letter openers, supplies, and other office items visible? May a child use these without permission? Inspect each bedroom for tempting, potentially dangerous items. Check each bathroom to make sure all sharp items are secure. Ensure dangerous chemicals are secure.

When the review of the house is completed, share the results with the applicants. Describe what the family has done to make their home safe for children. Discuss what needs to be changed. Answer questions about the inside of the house before proceeding to the outside spaces.

Begin the inspection of the yard by asking the applicants to identify possible dangers to a child in the yard. If they fail to see what you believe is a danger, ask the parents what they think about the situation that concerns you. For example, there may be gardening tools stored by the house. Ask the parents if they think access to rakes, shovels, and pruning shears are safe for children under six years of age.

If children are to play outside for a period of time consistent with their age, the yard must be safe from danger. Some of the obvious dangers, such as rusty items left in the yard, broken swing sets, and swimming pools require correcting. Any access to water must be restricted. Rule .1112 provides detailed instruction.

(b) The house shall be kept free of uncontrolled rodents and insects.

Ask the family how it keeps the house free of insects and rodents. In North Carolina, a structure that is left without protection quickly becomes infested. If the home does not have an exterminator service, ask the family to describe what they do to keep insects and rodents out of the house.

(c) Windows and doors used for ventilation shall be screened.

Check all windows and doors that open to the outside to make sure the screens are secure and in good repair. This is an important measure to keep out insects. On the second floor, screens reduce the danger of accidentally falling out. If the windows do not open, they do not have to have screens on them.

(d) The kitchen shall be equipped with an operable stove and refrigerator, running water and eating, cooking, and drinking utensils to accommodate the household members. The eating, cooking, and drinking utensils shall be cleaned and stored after each use.

Check the kitchen to make sure it is adequate to prepare food and clean utensils used for preparation, cooking, eating, and drinking. Licensing social workers should do this while they check the kitchen for safety. Turn on the stove. Check the oven. Turn on the water in the sink. Open the dishwasher. Inspect the refrigerator. All these appliances must be clean and in working order. Check the cupboards and the drawers. Make sure plates, cups, glasses, and utensils are clean and properly stored. If you would not eat a meal using the utensils, the kitchen does not meet this requirement.

(e) Household equipment and furniture shall be in good repair.

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Check all furniture and equipment to make sure they are in good repair. Look for broken furniture that may have sharp edges. Look for torn cushions and appliances with broken wiring. Use the home tour to look for such items. If items are not in good repair, ask the family to discard them.

- (f) Flammable and poisonous substances, medications, and cleaning materials shall be stored out of the reach of children placed for foster care.

This rule covers any material that may be dangerous to a child. Read the label. If it advises keeping out of reach of children, it is covered by this rule. This includes medications used by any member of the family. If family members wish to maintain their own medications, the medications must be secure from children in foster care.

The best way to meet this rule is for all such substances to be under lock and key. Encourage the applicants to consider using medication procedures as a guide on how to manage this rule.

- (g) Explosive materials, ammunition, and firearms shall each be stored separately, in locked places.

Any explosive material, such as gunpowder, dynamite, or any item listed on the US Department of Treasury Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms' "Commerce In Explosives List" must be kept in a locked place. Although foster families may keep legal explosives, it is advised that they not keep such substances in the home. Advise applicants to conduct any activity involving such items off premises.

Firearms must be kept securely locked. If the owner wishes to enhance the security of the firearm by using a trigger lock, this is commendable. The minimum requirement is that the firearm, with or without a trigger guard, be locked up. Ammunition for the firearm must be locked up and stored separately from the firearm. If a gun cabinet is used to store both firearm and ammunition, the cabinet must have separate locked areas for the firearm and the ammunition. It is recommended that foster families not keep firearms in the home.

- (h) Documentation that household pets have been vaccinated for rabies shall be maintained by the foster parents.

All household pets must be vaccinated against rabies as recommended by a licensed veterinarian. North Carolina law requires dogs and cats to be vaccinated. Farm animals that the child may come into contact with should be vaccinated against rabies if they are susceptible to rabies; a veterinarian can provide a list of animals that can contract rabies. It is recommended that any exotic pet be inspected by a licensed veterinarian and certified not to be hazardous to children. It is recommended that dogs be declared safe around children by a licensed veterinarian or recognized canine trainer.

When the safety of pets is assessed the licensing social worker should work closely with the foster family to safeguard foster children and to help the family assess the risk themselves. The licensing social worker should discuss with the family that the history of the child in relation to animals will probably be unknown and close supervision will be needed. Foster children may be afraid of animals and may have had no training in how to treat an animal so that their addition to the home may affect

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the usual behavior of the pet. The licensing social worker should consider as a part of the assessment how many pets the family has, how large they are and what their potential for causing harm may be. Small dogs may be just as vicious as large dogs but will have less potential for serious harm. The risk of harm goes up with the number of animals. The family should have a plan acceptable to the licensing social worker and the agency for the introduction of the pet to a child and the continued supervision of their interaction.

(I) Each home shall have heating, air-cooling, or ventilating capability to maintain a range between 65° F (18.3° C) and 85° F (29.4° C).

Each individual foster home should determine its method of heating and cooling. The Licensing Authority does not prescribe any type of heating or cooling for a foster home. The licensing social worker should have a clear understanding of how the home is heated and cooled. The method should be consistent with the climate. In the western part of the state, no cooling may be needed for the summers are not overly hot. In the eastern part of the state, space heaters may be all that is needed to warm a home in the winter. The key to this rule is, regardless of methods used, the home is to be kept at the comfort range of at least 65° Fahrenheit and no more than 85° Fahrenheit.

(j) Rooms including toilets, baths, and kitchens without operable windows, shall have mechanical ventilation to the outside.

Most homes built since 1980 have a ventilation fan in the bathrooms and kitchens as required by building codes. In some situations, these rooms do not have natural ventilation from a window. When toilets, bathrooms, and kitchens do not have natural ventilation, mechanical ventilation is required. This is because unvented kitchens and bathrooms build up residue when not ventilated. Such residue breeds molds and unhealthy bacteria. Check to make sure the ventilation fan operates in these spaces.

These requirements are ongoing and should be checked regularly. Any failure to comply with this rule must be corrected immediately. Environmental safety is a basic tenet of foster care.

K. 10A NCAC 70E .1111 ROOM ARRANGEMENTS

Children require space, they need space to sleep, relax, eat and be with other family members. They need space of their own where they know their belongings and privacy will be safe. Foster parent applicants provide additional living space in their home for children in care. This space is in addition to the space used when they do not have children in care. This space is in five distinct areas: family space, cooking space, dining space, sleeping space, and personal space. Each child in care needs space in each of these five areas.

Taking in a child in care is not like an extended sleepover or having a guest stay a few nights at holiday time. Taking in a child requires ongoing space for as long as the child is present.

These rules set out the minimum space expectations.

(a) Each home shall have a family room to meet the needs of the family including children placed for foster care.

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A foster home needs a place where all family members can gather and relax together. Many children who come into care have not seen healthy family interactions. The family area provides space for this to occur. The space should include children in foster care easily and without any additional changes in the space.

- (b) The kitchen shall be large enough for preparation of food and cleaning of dishes. Each home shall have a dining area to meet the needs of the family including

children placed for foster care.

The kitchen should be an inviting place and large enough to accommodate several people. The kitchen must have operating appliances for the cooking of meals and cleaning up. A sink with hot and cold running water and counter spaces for food preparation should be easily accessible. Additional space for sitting down and eating a meal encourages family interaction. If kitchen and dining spaces are in one room, the room needs to be large enough so that these activities can go on simultaneously without one interrupting the other.

- (c) Bedrooms shall be identified on a floor plan as bedrooms and shall not serve dual functions.

Each member of the family must have a designated sleeping place. This place is exclusively for sleeping. Neither the family room nor the dining area may be used for sleeping spaces. Rooms designated for sleeping must be as such labeled on a floor plan. Bedrooms cannot serve dual functions such as a room designated as a bedroom cannot serve as a walk through room in order to access another bedroom or another room in the home.

- (d) Children shall not be permitted to sleep in an unfinished basement or in an unfinished attic.

Unfinished spaces may not be used as sleeping quarters. If the space does not look finished, ask the local building inspector to make a visit and determine whether the space meets code for human use.

- (e) Each child shall have his/her own bed. Each bed shall be provided with a supported mattress, two sheets, blanket, bedspread, and be of size to accommodate the child. No day bed, convertible sofa, or other bedding of a temporary nature shall be used for the exclusive sleeping area of the child except for temporary care for up to two weeks.

Every child deserves a bed. Children may not share beds. It is their intimate space. The bed needs to be a secure and safe place for the child. The mattress must be supported off the floor. If the mattress has box springs, the box springs must be off the floor. If slats on a bed frame support the bed, there must be enough slats to allow the mattress to lie flat without any low areas. The bed must have two sheets, a blanket or quilt, and bedspread. Pillows should be clean and covered in pillowcases. Some teenagers do not want anyone bothering their room or their beds. In spite of such objections, the bed clothes need to be changed as needed to be kept clean.

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A child may not sleep on a temporary bed for more than two weeks and only in an emergency situation. Temporary beds are beds that can serve dual functions. If the bed converts to a sofa, a reclining area during the day, or to any other furniture, it is considered temporary. Futons are temporary bedding.

This rule continues to state:

The sleeping room shall not be shared by children of the opposite sex except by children age five and under. The sleeping arrangements shall provide space within the bedroom for the bed and the child's personal possessions. When children share a bedroom, a child under 6 shall not share a room with a child over 12, except when siblings are placed together. No more than four children shall share a room.

Bedrooms may be shared by a maximum of four children. Bedrooms may be shared only with other children of the same gender. Exceptions to this rule are only made for children under the age of five.

Children under age six must not be placed with children over age twelve. As much as possible, children who share a room should be the same age. Sibling groups are an exception to this rule. Regardless of the number of children sharing a bedroom, each child shall have his or her own space within the room. This space must be protected and respected.

Sharing sleeping space provides children with the opportunity to develop many important skills. Through this experience the child may learn about boundaries, cooperation, respecting private property, and expressing anger appropriately. If children must share rooms, foster parents should create a plan for helping the children develop and practice these skills. Licensing social workers should be sure foster parents understand that it will require a lot of their energy and attention if children are to share sleeping rooms.

(f) Separate and accessible drawer space and closet space for personal belongings and clothing shall be available for each child.

Each child needs a place for personal belongings. This should be behind a door (i.e., in a closet) or in a drawer. Many children coming into care are very protective of their personal belongings. Many have lived in places where their belongings were not protected and respected. Children learn to respect private property by having their own private property respected. Make sure each child has a safe place to keep personal belongings, which is not open for anyone else to view.

(g) The home shall have indoor, operable sanitary toilet, hand-washing, and bathing facilities. Homes shall be designed in a manner that will provide children privacy while bathing, dressing, and using toilet facilities.

Make sure each child has a safe place to keep clean. The bathroom should be an enclosed space, with four walls and a door. The toilet should be kept clean and in good working order. It should flush easily. It should be easily accessible for all ages: except very young children not yet potty trained. The toilet should not leak on the floor. A sink with hot and cold running water accessible to the child should be provided. Make sure there is soap for hand washing and towels for drying hands. Many children come

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into care from places where they did not have these minimum provisions. Many children will need to be taught basic hygiene skills.

Bathing should be a pleasant, secure experience for a child. Whether in a shower or bath tub, the child needs to feel safe and secure. Privacy is very important. Children should be assured that they will not be interrupted or intruded upon. If access to the bathroom is from a sleeping space, the person using the sleeping space must have private personal space. The walkway to the bathroom should not intrude upon the privacy of the occupants. Ideally, access to the bathroom is from a common space, such as a hall.

Being conscientious and considerate of bathroom needs and usage is very important to children. Make sure that such access is available and open at all times.

L. 10A NCAC 70E .1112 EXTERIOR SETTING AND SAFETY

The exterior spaces around the foster home, including any yard spaces shall be clear of any dangerous objects or hazardous items including access to water, such as swimming pools, beaches, rivers, lakes, or streams. Access to such hazards shall be avoided by either a fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate around the hazard, or by a fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate around the yard and exterior space of the home while still providing play space for children. Access to water in above ground swimming pools shall be prevented by locking and securing the ladder in place or storing the ladder in a place inaccessible to the children. The supervising agency shall observe and document that the foster parents have taken measures to protect foster children from having unsupervised access to swimming pools, beaches, rivers, lakes, streams, other water sources, or other hazards.

History Note: Authority G.S. 131D-10.1; 131D-10.3; 131D-10.5; 143B-153; Eff. September 1, 2007.

Rule 10A NCAC 70E .1112 sets out how to restrict a child's access to water and other exterior hazards. Every object in or around the foster home's yard must be evaluated for its risk of danger to children. Supervising agencies must inform applicants on or before the first visit to the home about this rule. Each body of water is considered a potential hazard. Foster parents need to know they may need to make modifications to their yard if their property contains water or other hazards.

The Supervising Agency licensing social worker must assess the presence of any potential water hazard and the family's ability to keep any child placed in their home safe and mitigate risk to any child. As part of the initial licensure process, and every relicensing process thereafter, the supervising agency must complete the Water Hazard Safety Assessment form (DSS-5018) with every family. The completed Water Hazard Safety Assessment form will be submitted to the licensing authority as an attachment to the Initial application and Relicense application. The licensing authority will review the Water Hazard Safety Assessment form to ensure that it is complete and that the content is acceptable.

The Supervising Agency licensing worker is responsible for assessing hazards in and around the foster home. The licensing social worker is responsible for making this assessment; this responsibility may not be delegated. Working with the foster family, the licensing social worker shall observe the home and surrounding environment.

Using the Water Hazard Safety Assessment form, the licensing worker will document

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safety measures in place to protect foster children from having unsupervised access to swimming pools, beaches, rivers, lakes, streams, other water sources, or other hazards. If a potential water hazard has been identified, the licensing worker will document the family's water safety plan which is part of the Water Hazard Safety Assessment form. The water safety plan will be maintained in the foster home in a place where it is accessible to all caregivers at all times.

In-ground swimming pools on the property of the foster home must be enclosed by a fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate. A fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate around the yard while providing play space for children, may be used to prevent access to the swimming pool. Access to water in above ground swimming pools shall be prevented by locking and securing the ladder in place or storing the ladder in a place inaccessible to the children. If a foster family installs a temporary or seasonal swimming pool that will remain in place for more than 24 hours it must either be enclosed by a fence at least 48" high, or access must be prevented by a removable ladder or a ladder that locks in place.

A foster child must be protected from access to potential water hazards such as ponds, beaches, rivers, lakes, streams, etc. that are on the property, or directly connected to the foster home and can be seen from the foster home at any time of year. The potential water hazard must be enclosed by a fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate, or by a fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate around the yard while providing play space for children.

If a fence surrounds a pool or other water hazard, the pool or the hazard may not be accessed directly from the house. If the fence joins the house, then an additional gateway must separate the pool area from the house. It is a fire code violation to block a designated egress door to limit access to a pool. The egress door must be accessible for immediate exit and the pool must be protected behind a fence.

If the potential water hazard is not directly connected to the property, using the Water Hazard Safety Assessment form, the licensing worker must carefully assess the risk to foster children based on the distance from the foster home to the water hazard, and the applicants' experience in supervising children who may have access to the water hazard. The water safety plan will document safety measures that will be put in place based on the age and maturity of foster children who will be placed in the home.

Supervising agencies shall advise Child Placing agencies, or individuals that are considering placing a child in the home, of any known potential water hazards and provide the completed Water Hazard Safety Assessment form upon request of the child placing agency. When a foster child is placed in a home where there is a known potential water safety hazard the licensing social worker will provide the foster parent(s) with the Individual Water Hazard Safety Plan form (DSS-5018a). The foster parent shall complete the Individual Water Hazard Safety Plan form within three calendar days of the placement and updated when changes occur thereafter, provide the completed form to the child's foster care social worker at the first visit, and supervise the foster child's access to potential safety hazards in accordance with the Individual Water Hazard Safety Plan.

Whenever a child is placed in a foster home where a potential water hazard exists, the child's Social Worker will review the completed Individual Water Hazard Safety Plan with the foster family within 7 calendar days after the day of placement in the home. Modifications may be made at that time based

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on the individual needs of the child. The Individual Water Hazard Safety Plan will be will be maintained in the foster home in a place where it is accessible to all caregivers at all times.

M. [10A NCAC 70E .1113 LICENSING COMPLIANCE VISITS](#)

Quarterly Visits. Licensing social workers of supervising agencies shall visit with the foster parents on at least a quarterly basis for the specific purpose of assessing licensing requirements. These visits shall be face-to-face. Two of the quarterly visits each year shall take place in the foster home. It is highly recommended that all quarterly visits occur in the foster home. However, two visits can occur at a location that is convenient to both the licensing worker and foster parents. These visits should occur in locations that are conducive to privacy, confidentiality, etc.

Foster parents shall be assessed equally at initial licensure, quarterly and at relicensure to ensure compliance with licensing rules and policy. Therefore, the foster mother and foster father, as well as anyone designated on the foster home license as a foster parent, shall participate in the quarterly licensing compliance visits. If it is not convenient for all the foster parents to meet with the licensing worker at the same time then the licensing worker shall schedule separate meetings with them. An exception to this policy can be made if one foster parent is deployed overseas. This exception must be documented in the foster home record.

These face-to-face quarterly visits serve several important purposes. At least once a quarter, foster parents need the opportunity to talk with their licensing social worker about concerns and progress in caring for the foster children placed in their homes. At least once a quarter, foster parents deserve to hear what they are doing well and what needs to be improved. This is an opportunity for the licensing social worker to assess strengths and needs of each foster parent and compliance with licensing requirements. During these visits, the licensing social worker should make sure that sleeping space, fire safety and environmental standards continue to be met. These visits are excellent opportunities to determine if there are any new household members.

Quarterly visits need to occur even if there are no foster children in the home. The licensing social worker still needs to assess the foster home's continued compliance with licensing regulations. If the foster family has not accepted any foster children, discussions need to be held to determine their continued interest in providing foster care services.

The requirement to visit with foster parents on a quarterly basis is a minimum expectation. If foster parents need additional attention, the licensing social worker is expected to make additional visits. It is recommended that the licensing social worker visit newly licensed foster parents as often as needed in order for them to feel confident about their skills and abilities to provide foster care services.

The licensing social worker is required to document these visits, including the dates they occur, the names of participants and notes about the content of the visits. Foster parents shall also be given an opportunity to document any of their concerns or needs. Supervising agencies are required to use a Quarterly Licensing Visit Documentation form to assess continued compliance with licensing standards. An example of this form is provided by the Division of Social Services (RLS 26). Supervising agencies can develop their own form but all of the elements outlined on the Division's form must be

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included on the supervising agency's form. Please note that both foster parents are required to sign the Quarterly Licensing Visit Documentation form.

Quarterly visits can be completed by someone other than the licensing social worker as long as these individuals meet the [criteria for a Social Worker II](#) as established by the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources

Individuals conducting quarterly licensing visits must understand that the purpose of the visits is to assess compliance with foster home licensing requirements. Foster parents must understand that the visits are meant to discuss licensing requirements. Quarterly visits must be separate and apart from any child specific visits or supervision visits. If done on the same day as a supervision visit, one could have 60 minutes of supervision, and then, once the supervision visit is completed, conduct the quarterly visit, covering all required topics with the foster parent. If someone other than the licensing worker conducts the quarterly licensing visit, the agency must have procedures in place to ensure the licensing worker will receive the Quarterly Licensing Visit Documentation form, as well as, any other information from the quarterly visits in a timely manner.

It is important for agencies to understand that any staff member (social workers, case managers, qualified professionals, supervisory staff, etc.) who visits the foster home or visits with foster children in the home has a responsibility to continually assess safety and risk factors. DSS Form 5295 (Monthly Foster Care Contact Record) (<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5295-ia.pdf>) provides guidance related to foster care visits.

N. 10A NCAC 70E .1114 CRIMINAL HISTORIES

Individuals convicted of certain crimes are prohibited from providing foster care. These crimes include abusing children, spousal abuse, crimes against children, and crimes of serious violence. To ensure each person granted a license has not been convicted of such crimes, every applicant's criminal history must be assessed. If any person in the applicant's home who is 18 years of age or older refuses to allow such a background check, the home is not eligible to be licensed. Criminal background checks must be performed in three areas: local, state, and federal. Applicants and adult household members must reveal all criminal charges and convictions as well as any pending convictions to the supervising agency at the time of their initial licensure. Failure to do this may result in the revocation of their license if these charges and convictions are discovered after the foster home has been licensed.

Local criminal background checks are done using records of the Superior Court with jurisdiction of the foster home. Typically, these records are kept at the county court house. This check is usually performed by supervising agency staff, although some supervising agencies contract with private companies to do this check. Supervising agencies can use private companies to conduct criminal background checks as long as the company is listed on the website of the NC Administrative Office of the Courts <http://www.nccourts.org/citizens/gotocourt/documents/cbcccompanies.pdf>.

In order to use a private company to conduct a criminal background check the agency must submit a waiver request to their licensing consultant. Private agencies must submit a waiver request to the

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licensing consultant assigned to their agency. County departments of social services will need to submit a waiver request to the licensing consultants at the Black Mountain office.

The results of the local check should be recorded on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016). This check must be performed prior to initial licensing and at every relicensure. Foster parents must inform the supervising agency of any criminal charges and convictions of adult household members within 72 hours of a charge or conviction. Supervising agencies must report this to the Licensing Authority within five business days of receipt of the information on the Foster Home Change Request Application (DSS-5159).

State level criminal background checks are done by checking internet databases for any criminal conviction or substantiated report of harming persons in care. These checks must be performed prior to initial licensing and at every relicensure. To conduct this check, the supervising agency checks the following sites and records the results on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016):

- NC Department of Public Safety Offenders:
<http://www.doc.state.nc.us/offenders>
- NC Sex Offender and Public Registry:
<http://sexoffender.ncdoj.gov>
- NC Health Care Personnel Registry:
<http://www.ncnar.org/nchcpr.html>

- (a) An applicant shall not be licensed if the applicant, or any member of the applicant's household 18 years of age or older, refuses to consent to a criminal history check required by G.S. § 131D, Article 1A.

Federal criminal records checks are done using fingerprints. Each person who is 18 years of age or older in the applicant family must be fingerprinted and the fingerprints must be processed through the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education.

Inform applicants that these extensive searches will be conducted. Applicants need to understand that it is imperative that they reveal any findings before the supervising agency conducts these searches. If findings are revealed that were not disclosed by applicants, a thorough explanation must be provided to the Licensing Authority.

- (b) An applicant or any member of the applicant's household is not eligible for

licensure if the applicant or any member of the applicant's household has been convicted of a felony involving:

- (1) child abuse or neglect;
- (2) spouse abuse;

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- (3) a crime against a child or children (including child pornography); or
- (4) a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide but not including other physical assault or battery.

Individuals who have abused or neglected children, abused a spouse, committed a crime against a child, or committed a serious violent crime cannot be licensed as foster parents. This rule applies regardless of when the conviction occurred. Inform applicants of this rule early in the application process. Help foster parents understand that if the criminal history check uncovers evidence of such crimes, the felon and everyone who shares the felon's household are excluded from licensure. Adult children, relatives, or friends with such criminal records may not become members of a licensed foster home.

- (c) An applicant or any member of the applicant's household is not eligible for licensure if the applicant or any member of the applicant's household has within the last five years been convicted of a felony involving:
 - (1) physical assault;
 - (2) battery; or
 - (3) a drug-related offense.

These convictions do not rule out applicants from being a foster parent if the offenses took place more than five years (60 months) ago. However, it does not mean they will automatically be accepted as foster parents. Persons with criminal records of this kind who have become responsible adults may be considered for licensure. The supervising agency should assess the applicants and household members past criminal activity carefully along with their current attitudes toward this and evidence of their maturing beyond this type of behavior. This requires at least a two-level staffing decision and a written recommendation from the agency's executive director must accompany the request for a license.

- (d) An applicant or any members of the applicant's household with criminal convictions except those specified in Paragraph (b) of this Rule may be considered for licensure based on the following factors:
 - (1) nature of the crime;
 - (2) length of time since the conviction;
 - (3) circumstances surrounding the commission of the offense or offenses;
 - (4) number and type of prior offenses;
 - (5) evidence of rehabilitation;

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(6) age of the individual at the time of the commission of the offense or offenses;
and

(7) letter of support for licensure from the executive director of the agency.

If the supervising agency wishes to recommend licensure or relicensure in spite of the applicant's criminal record, the licensing social worker should meet with the applicants to discuss the matter. This requires at least a two-level staffing decision and a written recommendation from the agency's executive director must accompany the request for a license.

The letter must state the details of the criminal record, why the agency recommends licensure in spite of the criminal record, and why the person's past criminal behavior does not adversely affect his/her ability to care for children in foster care. Once it is received by the Licensing Authority, this letter is in the public domain, so the executive director should write this letter as if it will be printed in the local newspaper.

Supervising agencies shall also inquire if any juvenile members of the household have any charges and conviction that were processed in Juvenile Court. Juvenile Court records are sealed; however, it is the responsibility of the foster parent to discuss these charges and convictions with the supervising agency. It is the responsibility of the supervising agency to assess these charges and convictions and make a recommendation to the Licensing Authority regarding the impact of these charges and convictions as they relate to the safety of foster children. The supervising agency shall discuss this issue in Skill 10 of the Mutual Home Assessment. Foster parents must report any charges and juvenile convictions to their supervising agency within 72 hours of their occurrence. The supervising agency must report this information to the Licensing Authority on the Foster Home Change Request Application (DSS-5159) within 5 business days.

Following are some of the things that might be considered by an agency and included in a letter recommending licensure:

- The nature, magnitude, frequency, and duration of the crime. Be sure to note whether the crime is non-violent in nature;
- The age of the foster parent applicant when the crime occurred and how much time has lapsed since the crime occurred;
- Evidence of rehabilitation shown through behavior since the incident(s) and the increased self-awareness or greater understanding of the effects of criminal behavior;
- Evidence of a change in habits and attitude and of successful treatment when appropriate as in the case of a history of substance abuse;
- The honesty and candor of the applicant in sharing their past criminal activity

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Although supervising agencies can make a recommendation on licensure, the Licensing Authority makes the final decision whether to approve the license. In the case of applicants with criminal records, the Licensing Authority will consider each request on its merits. Safety for children in foster care will always be the top priority. Children, birth families, and the community all need to feel confident that North Carolina is diligently protecting children in its care.

O. 10A NCAC 70E .1115 RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS LIST

(a) An applicant is not eligible for licensure if the applicant has within the last five years been substantiated for abuse or serious neglect and is placed on the Responsible Individuals List as defined in North Carolina General Statute 7B-311.

The responsible individuals list (RIL) is a list of individuals determined to be responsible for the abuse and/or serious neglect of a juvenile. Information from this list may be released to designated authorized users such as: child caring institutions, child-placing agencies, group home facilities, and other providers of foster care, childcare, or adoption services. RIL information may be used to determine current or perspective employability or fitness to care for children; this includes foster and adoptive applicants.

When it has been determined that a person is a responsible individual they become eligible for their name to be placed on the RIL. The name is not placed on the RIL until after the timeframe for requesting a judicial review of the decision to place their name on the RIL has passed, or a juvenile petition orders the placement of the name or when a Judicial Review petition results in a determination that the name should be placed on the RIL. More information on the RIL is located in Cross Function Topics in the [NC Child Welfare manual](#).

Prior to initial licensure, supervising agencies must check the RIL to ensure that the applicants and adult household members are not on the RIL due to an incident that occurred with the past five years (60 or fewer months). People on the RIL for less than five years are prohibited by law from caring for children in foster care; they cannot be recommended for licensure. If a person's name is on the RIL but the incident occurred five or more years ago (61+ months), the supervising agency may submit a written request to the Licensing Authority to include the individual in a household licensed to care for children in foster care.

The supervising agency should consider carefully his or her decision to recommend someone who has been placed on the RIL at any time. Applicants should always be asked if they have ever had a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation of their family and whether the report was substantiated or not. The applicants should be able to discuss the circumstances involved in the investigation. The decision to recommend someone who has been listed on the RIL or had substantiation for abuse or neglect should be made after a two level review. The recommendation for licensure should be accompanied by a letter of advocacy addressing the applicant's CPS history and must be signed by the agency's executive director.

RIL checks do not have to be conducted for relicensures unless the license has lapsed for more than 30 days.

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To request information from the RIL, supervising agencies must use the Results of the Responsible Individuals List (RIL) Form (DSS-5268). Applicants and adult household members must sign the completed form. Private agencies must submit the DSS-5268 to the Division of Social Services (FAX: 919-715-6714 to the attention of "RIL"). The private agency will receive in return the signed and dated DSS-5268 with the results marked. This document must be submitted with the application packet.

Public agency licensing workers are able to access the RIL within their own agency. Public agency licensing workers must complete the section of the DSS-5268 marked for NCDSS office use only. The actual results of the search should be maintained in the files of the public agency. The signature of the licensing worker and date on the 5268 indicate that those results are in their records. The public agency licensing worker must submit the DSS-5268 in the application packet.

An individual usually knows if he or she is listed on the RIL. If a check of the RIL indicates a person is on the list and the incidents are more than five years ago, the supervising agency must decide whether to recommend the person be licensed in spite of a history of abusing or seriously neglecting a child.

(b) After five years, an applicant who is on the Responsible Individuals List may be considered for licensure based on the following factors:

- (1) nature of the substantiation;
- (2) length of time since the substantiation;
- (3) circumstances surrounding the substantiation;
- (3) evidence of rehabilitation;
- (5) history of convictions and violations; and
- (6) letter of support for licensure from the executive director of the agency.

When the supervising agency wishes to recommend licensure of a person whose RIL incident is over five years old, the supervising agency director must write a letter of support to be included in the packet sent to the Licensing Authority office. This letter should include information to show that the director understands the nature of the applicant's situation, which is based on the applicant's disclosure of the history. The letter must include a description of the substantiated child abuse or serious neglect, how long ago this incident occurred, the circumstances surrounding the incident, evidence of rehabilitation, and any criminal convictions or violations involving children. The letter should explain the reasons the director wishes this individual to be licensed to care for children in foster care. Once it is received by the Licensing Authority, this letter is public domain; therefore, the supervising agency's executive director should write this letter as if it will be printed in the local newspaper. The supervising agency's director will need to carefully assess each situation and present an honest and complete picture so that the Licensing Authority can make an informed decision.

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(c)The supervising agency shall provide documentation to the licensing authority of the results of Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry Checks of states where the applicant has resided the past five years.

The licensing social worker will need to obtain information from child abuse and/or neglect registries from the states where the applicants and adult household members have resided for the past five years. The findings are documented on the Foster Home Licensing Application (DSS-5016). This information can be accessed:

http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/policy-issues/State_Child_Abuse_Registries.pdf

P. 10A NCAC 70E .1116 CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS

(a) The supervising agency shall complete the following activities at initial licensure for new foster parent applicants and any member of the prospective foster parents' household 18 years of age or older:

- (1) furnish the written notice as required by G.S. 131D-10.3A(e);
- (2) obtain a signed consent form for a criminal history check and submit the signed consent form to the Department of Health and Human Services, Criminal Records Check Unit;
- (3) obtain two sets of fingerprints on SBI identification cards and forward both sets of fingerprints to the Department of Health and Human Services, Criminal Records Check Unit. Once an individual's fingerprints have been submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services, Criminal Records Check Unit, additional fingerprints shall not be required; and

(4) conduct a local criminal history check through accessing the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Department of Corrections Offender Population Unified System and submit the results of the criminal history checks to the

licensing authority on the Foster Home Application form.

Applicants for foster care licensing are fingerprinted only once. If a licensed foster family wishes to transfer to another supervising agency, their fingerprinted criminal check status transfers with them.

The fingerprint process begins with securing permission from the applicant to conduct the criminal records check based upon fingerprints. A copy of the form, Notice to Foster Home of Mandatory Criminal History Check (DSS-5280), must be read and signed by the applicant and by any other person age 18 or older in the home. Each person should sign his or her own form. This form gives the details of the criminal records search as well as what the person may do if the search reveals something with which the person disagrees. Make sure each person age 18 or older in the home signs one of these forms.

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Applicants and adult household members can be fingerprinted by the supervising agency by using the ink fingerprint cards or they can be electronically fingerprinted by an approved law enforcement agency. To complete the ink fingerprint cards the supervising agency can obtain fingerprint cards and bubble sheets from:

NC Department of Health and Human Services
Criminal Record Check Unit | DSS
MSC 2201
Raleigh, NC 27699-2201

Two fingerprint cards and a bubble sheet need to be completed for each applicant and adult household member. The supervising agency mails one fingerprint card and the bubble sheet to the NC DHHS Criminal Record Check Unit address listed above.

The Division of Child Development processes the documents then forwards them to the SBI for the state check. If the fingerprints are of sufficient print quality the SBI processes and forwards to the FBI for the national check. The criminal history is returned to the SBI then to the Division of Child Development. If there is no criminal history found the supervising agency receives a fingerprint clearance letter stating “MEETS THE CRITERIA” as a foster parent. Sometimes there are issues with insufficient print quality, which results in the fingerprint cards and a letter being returned to the supervising agency informing them the prints are unclassifiable. The second fingerprint card needs to be submitted and the process begins over. If after the third attempt fingerprints are returned the DCD automatically resubmits to the SBI asking for “name search only”. When a criminal history is found the DCD informs the Licensing Authority. The Licensing Authority contacts the supervising agency to notify them there is a criminal history that prevented the applicant or adult household member from receiving fingerprint clearance. The supervising agency discusses with the applicant that they did not receive fingerprint clearance and the applicant can request a copy of the record from The North Carolina Department of Justice. Please note that it take a while for the page to load after clicking on the link. When the page appears, scroll to the bottom and click on the link that contains the words “Right to Review Fillable Form”. A Word document will then open.

If the supervising agency wants to have their foster parent applicants and adult household members fingerprinted electronically through Live Scan at approved law enforcement agencies, start by accessing:

<http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/home.asp>. On this web page select “DHHS Criminal Record Checks” which will take the worker to a list of type of background checks the DHHS Criminal Record Check Unit performs. When submitting an application for a foster parent applicant they must be fingerprinted as a foster parent applicant even when the foster parent plans to adopt. Click on Foster Care; it will provide you with three links and directions on how to complete the required documents for electronic fingerprinting. Also in this section there is an Approved Agency Guide, this is a list of the law enforcement agencies in each NC County that is approved to complete the Live Scan fingerprinting. These are the only locations that SBI/FBI will accept Live Scan fingerprinting results. Once applicants are fingerprinted by Live Scan, the Certified Electronic Fingerprint Release Form and the bubble sheet (DHHS001) must be submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services Criminal Record Check Unit at the following address:

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NC Department of Health and Human Services
Criminal Record Check Unit | Foster Care Team
MSC 2201
Raleigh, NC 27699-2201
Attn: Electronic Fingerprinting

The SBI/FBI are processing Live Scan fingerprints in a matter of days so it is imperative for prompt notification that the required paperwork be mailed to DHHS the same day the fingerprints are taken to avoid delays. DHHS will not release any results of the fingerprinting until the required paperwork is complete and on file.

Public Law 92-533 authorizes the FBI to exchange criminal history record information (CHRI) with, and for the official use of, authorized officials of the Federal Government, States, cities and other institutions. Under this legislation CHRI may be used in connection with licensing or employment purposes for which dissemination is authorized by federal law. CHRI obtained under this authority may only be used for the purpose for which the record was requested. If CHRI is requested for a foster care license the information obtained from that request can not be used if the applicant later requests to be an adoptive applicant. If this occurs, applicants will have to submit another set of fingerprints to DCD strictly for the purpose of adoption. Conversely, should adoptive parents later become foster parent applicants they are required to submit another set of fingerprints to DCD strictly for the purpose of foster care. The Criminal Record Check letter from DCD that is submitted to the Licensing Authority on prospective foster parents must state that the applicant MEETS THE CRITERIA for a foster parent and not an adoptive parent, otherwise the foster home licensing packet will be returned to the supervising agency.

The FBI considers county departments of social services as agents of the state and specific criminal convictions can be released to them. However private agencies are not considered agents of the state and the only information that can be provided to private agencies is that the applicant or household member has criminal charges. Applicants and household members can obtain copies of their criminal histories by following the procedures at this website: North Carolina Department of Justice. Please note that it take a while for the page to load after clicking on the link. When the page appears, scroll to the bottom and click on the link that contains the words "Right to Review Fillable Form". A Word document will then open. They can then provide this information to the private agency.

(b) The supervising agency shall conduct a local criminal history check through accessing the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Department of Corrections Offender Population Unified System and submit the results of the criminal history checks to the licensing authority on the Foster Home Relicensure, Termination and Change Request Application form at relicensure for foster parents and any member of the prospective foster parents' household 18 years of age or older.

The supervising agency must also perform online and courthouse checks for criminal activity. Unlike the fingerprint search, these searches must be done at every relicensure (i.e., every two years). The results of these searches are entered on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016), the Foster Home Relicense Application (DSS-5157), and the Foster Home Change Request Application (DSS-5159). An administrative staff person may perform these criminal records checks. However the licensing

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social worker must review the results of these searches before they are submitted to the Licensing Authority.

Q. 10A NCAC 70E .1117 TRAINING REQUIRMENTS

Each supervising agency shall provide, or cause to be provided; pre-service and in- service training for all prospective and licensed foster parents as follows:

(1) Prior to licensure or within six months from the date a provisional license is issued, each applicant shall successfully complete 30 hours of pre-service training. Pre-service training shall include the following components:

- (a) General Orientation to Foster Care and Adoption Process;
- (b) Communication Skills;
- (c) Understanding the Dynamics of Foster Care and Adoption Process;
- (d) Separation and Loss;
- (e) Attachment and Trust;
- (f) Child and Adolescent Development;
- (g) Behavior Management;
- (h) Working with Birth Families and Maintaining Connections;
- (i) Lifebook Preparation;
- (j) Planned Moves and the Impact of Disruptions;
- (k) The Impact of Placement on Foster and Adoptive Families;
- (l) Teamwork to Achieve Permanence;
- (m) Cultural Sensitivity;
- (n) Confidentiality; and
- (o) Health and Safety.

Supervising agencies are responsible for providing pre-service training for foster parent applicants. The above 15 components must be included in the curriculum. The Division of Social Services provides the train-the-trainer curriculum entitled MAPP-GPS (Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting-

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Group Preparation and Selection) to foster parent trainers. Agencies are also permitted to use other nationally recognized foster parent training curriculums. However these courses must contain the 15 required components and be approved by the Regulatory and Licensing Services Team. Agencies can develop their own curriculums to cover the 15 components, but before they can be used all teaching notes, study guides, workbooks, handouts, etc. must be submitted to the Division of Social Services' Staff Development Team for approval.

Agency social workers that teach pre-service training must meet the state personnel requirements for a Social Worker II. It is highly recommended that agencies encourage and identify foster parents with at least two years of active foster parent experience to become certified as MAPP (or other approved curricula) pre-service trainers. In these situations, the foster parent is not required to meet the Social Worker II requirements. Once these foster parents have been certified to train the foster parent pre-service curriculum, they co-train the pre-service training with the agency social worker. If a certified MAPP-GPS trainer or trainers of other approved curriculums have not taught the pre-service course for three or more years they must be recertified before they can teach pre-service training to prospective foster and adoptive parents.

It is preferred that the social worker teaching the pre-service training also completes the licensing paperwork. When this is not possible, a plan for how the two workers (the pre-service trainer and the licensing social worker) will communicate is essential. It is recommended that this plan include identification of at least one time for a joint face to face discussion including both workers and the prospective family regarding the mutual assessment and the family's strengths/needs associated with the 12 skills. In addition, it is recommended that the pre-service training worker share with the licensing social worker the group meeting notes (which include observations by the pre-service trainer from the group meetings) as well as the strengths/needs assessments that are completed by the family during the group meetings. These steps will assure that a thorough and behaviorally specific description of the 12 skills will occur in the summary sent to the Licensing Authority.

- (2) Prior to licensure or within six months from the date a provisional license is issued, therapeutic foster parent applicants shall receive at least ten additional hours of pre-service training in behavioral mental health treatment services including the following:
 - (a) role of the therapeutic foster parent;
 - (b) safety planning; and
 - (c) managing behaviors.

The Division of Social Services has developed a 10-hour pre-service course for therapeutic foster parents called "Becoming a Therapeutic Foster Parent" that covers these required topics. An online train-the-trainer curriculum for "Becoming a Therapeutic Foster Parent" can be accessed by logging in to: <https://www.ncswlearn.org> and navigating to the Personalized Learning Portfolio (PLP) / Online Courses section of the website. If you do not have an account, click on "create an account" on the main page of [ncswlearn.org](https://www.ncswlearn.org) and follow the instructions. Agencies are also permitted to use other nationally recognized foster parent training curriculums to meet this therapeutic pre-service training

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requirement. However these courses must contain the 3 required components and be approved by the Regulatory and Licensing Services Team. Agencies can develop their own curriculums to cover the 3 components, but before they can be used all teaching notes, study guides, workbooks, handouts, etc. must be submitted to the Division of Social Services' Staff Development Team for approval.

- (3) During the initial two years of licensure, each therapeutic foster parent shall receive additional training in the following areas:
 - (a) development of the person-centered plan;
 - (b) dynamics of emotionally disturbed and substance abusing youth and families;
 - (c) symptoms of substance abuse;
 - (d) needs of emotionally disturbed and substance abusing youth and families; and
 - (e) crisis intervention.

There are no curriculums prescribed or recommended by the Division of Social Services for these five trainings. Supervising agencies are responsible for providing or arranging training that addresses these components.

(4) Training in first-aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and universal precautions such as those provided by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or equivalent organizations shall be provided to foster parents before a foster child is placed with the foster family. Training in CPR shall be appropriate for the ages of children in care. First-aid, CPR, and universal precautions training shall be updated as required by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or equivalent organizations. The supervising agency shall ensure that family foster parents and therapeutic foster parents are trained in medication administration before a child is placed with the foster family.

A child cannot be placed in a foster home until the foster parents have received these trainings and demonstrated an ability to provide first-aid and CPR, administer medications, and observe universal precautions.

- (5) Child-specific training shall be provided to the foster parents as required in the out-of-home family services agreement or person-centered plan as a condition of the child being placed in the foster home. When the child or adolescent requires treatment for abuse – reactive, sexually reactive and sexual offender behaviors, specific treatment shall be identified in his/her person-centered plan. Training of therapeutic foster parents is required in all aspects of reactive and offender specific sexual treatment and shall be made available by a provider who meets the requirements specified for a qualified professional as defined in 10A NCAC 27G .0104. When the child or adolescent requires treatment for substance abuse, specific treatment shall be identified in his/her person-centered plan. Training and supervision of therapeutic foster parents are required in all aspects of substance

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abuse and shall be made available by a provider who meets the requirements specified for qualified substance abuse prevention professional as defined in 10A NCAC 27G .0104. This training shall count towards the training requirements of Item (6) of this Rule.

Whenever specific needs and issues are identified for a child, foster parents may need specialized training. This training can be identified in the out-of-home family services agreement or person-centered plan. It is the responsibility of the supervising agency to provide or arrange this training.

- (6) Prior to licensure renewal, each foster parent shall successfully complete at least twenty hours of in-service training. This training may be child-specific or may concern issues relevant to the general population of children in foster care. In order to meet this requirement:
 - (a) each supervising agency shall provide, or cause to be provided, at least 10 hours of in-service training for foster parents annually;
 - (b) the training shall include subjects that would enhance the skills of foster parents and promote stability for children;
 - (c) a foster parent may complete training provided by a community college, a licensed supervising agency, or other departments of State or county governments; and, upon approval by the supervising agency, such training shall count towards meeting the requirements specified in this Item; and
 - (d) each supervising agency shall document in the foster parent record the type of activity the foster parent has completed pursuant to this Item.

To remain licensed, every foster parent must attend 10 hours of in-service training every year. Supervising agencies must provide or otherwise ensure that foster parents receive this training.

This in-service training may be child-specific or it may concern issues relevant to the general population of children in foster care. In general, in-service training must be on topics that enhance the skills of foster parents and promote stability for children. County departments of social services and private child-placing agencies are urged to develop their own curricula for in-service training so that training may be available throughout the year for foster parents.

Licensing social workers should strongly advise foster parents to check in with them before spending money on training to ensure the training is considered valid and appropriate by the supervising agency. Training that foster parents locate on their own should have the agency's approval in advance. Licensing social workers should advocate with their agency to develop a written policy on training materials that will meet requirements.

Once foster parents receive training, supervising agencies are responsible for documenting in the foster parent record the type of activity the foster parent has completed to fulfill the annual in-service training requirement.

- (7) A foster family caring for a child with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) shall complete six hours of training on

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issues relevant to HIV or AIDS annually. This training may count towards the training requirements Item (6) of this Rule.

Families caring for children with HIV or AIDS must attend six hours of advanced medical training annually. This training, which must cover topics relevant to HIV or AIDS, counts toward the foster parents' annual 10-hour in-service training requirement.

(8) Training requirements for physical restraint holds pursuant to 10A NCAC 70E .1103.

Most supervising agencies do not permit the foster parents they supervise to use physical restraint holds. If their agency permits the use of physical restraints, before they can use physical restraint holds foster parents must complete at least 16 hours of training by a certified/approved trainer in behavior management. The training must include techniques for de-escalating problem behavior, the appropriate use of physical restraint holds recognized by the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services as approved physical restraint holds, monitoring of vital indicators, and debriefing children and foster parents involved in physical restraint holds. To remain certified to use physical restraint holds, every year foster parents must complete at least eight hours of behavior management training by a certified/approved trainer, including techniques for de-escalating problem behavior. This training counts toward the foster parents' annual in-service training requirement.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Non Discrimination Policy

The North Carolina Division of Social Services, county departments of social services, and private licensed child-placing agencies are prohibited from discriminating against any applicant desiring to serve as a foster family, family foster care, therapeutic foster care (relative and non-relative) for reasons of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, or political beliefs. All applicants must be afforded their rights specified in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9), 671(a)(18), 674(d) and 1996(b), and the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901 et seq.

Following recruitment, each potential foster family must receive pre-service training and be evaluated based on North Carolina Administrative Rules ([10A NCAC 70E](#)) and this Foster Home Licensing policy. Foster parent applications are accepted or denied based on their

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compliance with North Carolina Administrative Rules (10A NCAC 70E) and this Foster Home Licensing policy.

Foster parents shall be persons whose behaviors, circumstances, and health are conducive to the safety and well-being of children. Foster parents shall be selected on the basis of demonstrating strengths in the twelve skill areas listed below. These skills permit them to undertake and perform the responsibilities of meeting the needs of children, providing continuity of care, and working with the supervising agency. Foster parents shall demonstrate skills in:

1. Assessing individual and family strengths and needs and building on strengths and meeting needs;
2. Using and developing effective communication;
3. Identifying the strengths and needs of children placed in the home;
4. Building on children's strengths and meeting the needs of children placed in the home;
5. Developing partnerships with children placed in the home, parents or the guardians of the children placed in the home, the supervising agency, and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency;
6. Helping children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and skills to form attachments;
7. Helping children placed in the home manage their behaviors;
8. Helping children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts;
9. Helping children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity;
10. Providing a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home, which keeps them free from harm;
11. Assessing the ways in which providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care affects the family; and
12. Making an informed decision regarding providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care.

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To assure the availability of foster homes sufficient in number and diversity, on-going recruitment efforts are needed. Creative, non-biased recruitment strategies are needed to attract and retain qualified foster care applicants. County departments of social services and private licensed child-placing agencies must afford every individual and family the opportunity to become a foster parent without regard to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability or political beliefs. County departments of social services and licensed private child-placing agencies must make these decisions based on their assessment of the individual's or family's ability to meet the needs of children who are in need of foster care placements and the individual or family's ability to meet foster home licensing requirements. Recruitment and retention strategies are outlined in *A Best*

Practice Guide To Partnering With Resource Families – Treat Them Like Gold

(https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/publications/docs/Best%20Practice%20Guide%202015/Partnering_with_Resource_Families.pdf).

It is the policy of the NC Department of Health and Human Services to provide services, care, benefits and assistance to all qualified persons without regard to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, or political beliefs. Information can be obtained about regulations against discrimination and how to file a complaint by writing to:

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services
Attention: Civil Rights Coordinator
820 S. Boylan Ave.
2401 Mail Service Center Raleigh,
NC 27699-2401

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, or political beliefs may file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint contact:

Director
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Room 515F
HHH Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20201
202-619-0403 (voice) or 202-619-3257 (TTY)

B. G.S. § 131D-10.6C Maintaining a register of licensed foster homes by the Division of Social Services.

(a) The Division of Social Services shall keep a register of all licensed family foster and therapeutic foster homes. The register shall contain the following information:

- (1) The name, age, and address of each foster parent.
- (2) The foster parent's supervising agency.
- (3) The number of hours of mandated training completed by the foster parent.

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- (4) The date of the initial licensure.
 - (5) The current licensing period.
 - (6) Any adverse licensing actions.
- (b) The register shall be a public record under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. However, the Division, without penalty, may withhold any specific information about a foster parent to the extent the release of the information would likely pose a threat to the health or safety of the foster parent or a foster child. A person who is denied access to information under this section may seek a court order compelling disclosure or copying in accordance with G.S. 132-9(a). Information not specified in subsection (a) of this section shall be considered confidential and not subject to disclosure."

If the Licensing Authority receives a request for foster parent information the Licensing Authority will contact the supervising agency before releasing this information. The purpose of this contact is to determine whether the release of the information will pose a threat to the health or safety of the foster parent or foster child.

It is important for foster home licensing social workers to inform foster families of G.S. § 131D-10.6C and the fact that under this law certain information about the family can be released to the public. It is also a good time to reinforce that foster parents are to keep information about children in their care confidential.

C. Best Business Practice for Transferring Families¹:

When a current foster family reaches out to your agency with hopes of transferring it is important to keep these things in mind:

1. We should always encourage families to make the effort to communicate with their current agency about what their problems or concerns are and to see if there is a way to fix those problems. It's the old Golden Rule! "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!" Don't you want your families to approach you first in an effort to improve or fix things before just giving up and transferring?
2. If they have tried to make things right with their current agency and still wish to transfer, have the family talk with their current supervising agency and let them know that they are meeting with you in an effort to see if your agency is a better match.
3. You should spend several meetings with the family in an effort to get to know them and for them to get to know you/your agency.
 - Suggested Topics of discussion during these meetings:
 - ♦ How long have you been fostering? How many children have you fostered or provided respite?

¹ *Best Business Practice for Transferring Families* was developed by Jessica Shanor, Eliada Homes for Children

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- ♦ Have you transferred your foster care license before? If so, why, when, etc.?
- ♦ What have you learned from your experience?
- ♦ What are your family's strengths/needs in fostering?
- ♦ What are you looking for in future placements?
- ♦ What are you looking for in your next supervising agency?
- ♦ Share your experiences with Shared Parenting? What did you learn? What would you have done differently?
- ♦ Have you had any investigations in your home during your time fostering? If so, what was that process like for you? How did you overcome those obstacles? Did you get support from your agency?
- ♦ What was your most challenging/most rewarding placement?
- ♦ What areas of training do you feel you need in order to meet the needs of the children placed in your home?

4. After you have spent some time with this family, and you and the family feel your agency is a good match, then have them sign a release form and send this to the current agency.

5. Once the release form has been received, and you have reviewed the material from the agency schedule a time to speak with the current supervisor of the foster family and discuss the following:

- What was your experience in working with this family?
- What are their strengths/needs?
- Did they work in partnership with CFT members?
- How did they approach Shared Parenting?
- Would you place children in their home again? If not, why?
- How did they treat children?
- Did they attend and engage in In-Service trainings?

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- What does this family need in order to be a successful foster family?
 - What type of placement would be most successful for this family?
 - Is there anything else I need to know about this family?
6. Ask the foster family to provide you with new reference reports.
7. Once you have received all of the necessary information and your agency and the family are in agreement to the transfer complete the following:
- a. Type up an updated Mutual Home Assessment with a description of your familiarity of the family, their skills and abilities and any other important information
 - b. Have the foster parents sign the Transfer Application
 - c. If applicable complete a relicensure packet
 - d. Complete a cover letter about the transfer. The letter should state whether there are children in the home (if so- then indicate the custodians of the children have been notified of the transfer)
 - e. Complete a new [DSS-5015](#)
 - f. If the family has moved, be sure to include an address change packet.

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D. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Treat Them Like Gold: A Best Practice Guide to Partnering with Resource Families
https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/publications/docs/Best%20Practice%20Guide%202015/Partnering_with_Resource_Families.pdf

E. REGULATORY AND LICENSING WEBSITE:

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/licensing/index.htm>

F. FOSTER HOME LICENSING: THE KEYS TO SUCCESS <https://www.ncswLearn.org>

G. NCDSS CHILD WELFARE SERVICES TRAINING CALENDAR <https://www.ncswLearn.org>

H. ADULT HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS WHO ENTER US ON A VISA

When a licensed foster home is planning to have an adult join the household that is in the United States on an approved VISA the supervising agency needs to take the steps outlined below to ensure that appropriate background checks have been completed. The foster family should be able to assist the agency in finding the needed information since it is their family or friend that has completed the process.

1. The supervising agency should consult with the appropriate Consulate or Embassy to inquire about the background check process for the specific VISA that the adult household member has been approved for. The foster family should know this information.
2. The supervising agency should contact the US Citizenship and Immigration Services office to also find out what kind of background checks were completed for the VISA and if the status is current. US Citizenship and Immigration Services offices are in Charlotte and Durham (https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=offices.detail&office=CLT&OfficeLocator.office_type=LO&OfficeLocator.statecode=NC).
3. If the supervising agency cannot determine the types of background checks that were completed for the individual entering the US any foster children placed in the home may need to be moved to ensure safety.

I. CITIZENSHIP STATUS OF FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parent applicants must be citizens of the United States through birth or naturalization or be able to verify lawful immigration status. Green cards provide verification of lawful immigration status. A copy of the green card shall be placed in the record of the foster parents that is maintained by the supervising agency. Information about green cards can be found at the following website:

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=80f63a4107083210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=80f63a4107083210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD>

Foster parent applicants and household members 18 years of age and older must meet the fingerprint requirements as outlined in the Foster Home Licensing Manual, VII, Section .1100, Item P (10A NCAC 70E .1116 Criminal History Checks).

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IX. GUIDE TO COMPLETING FOSTER CARE LICENSING FORMS

The following is a list of all the forms that may be used for a foster home licensing process.

These forms can be found online at: <https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/info/olm/forms/dss/>

1. [DSS-5015](#) Foster Care Facility Action Request
2. [DSS-5016](#) Foster Home License Application (**request the Microsoft® Word version from the Licensing Authority**)
 3. [DSS-1515](#) Foster Home Fire Inspection Report
 4. [DSS-5150](#) Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report
 5. [DSS-5017](#) Medical History Form
 6. [DSS-5156](#) Medical Evaluation (with completed TB test results included)
 7. [DSS 5268](#) Responsible Individual List (RIL) Information Request
8. [DSS-5157](#) Foster Home Relicense Application (**request the Microsoft® Word version from the Licensing Authority**)
9. [DSS-5158](#) Foster Home Transfer Request Application (**request the Microsoft® Word version from the Licensing Authority**)
10. [DSS-5159](#) Foster Home Change Request Application (**request the Microsoft® Word version from the Licensing Authority**)
11. [DSS-5160](#) Foster Home Termination Application (**request the Microsoft® Word version from the Licensing Authority**)
 12. [DSS-5280](#) Notice Foster Home Mandatory Criminal History Check
 13. [DSS-5199](#) Foster Home Request for Waiver
 14. [DSS-5279](#) Request for Revocation of a Foster Home License
 15. [DSS-5281](#) Critical Incident Reporting Form
 16. [DSS-5282](#) Notification of CPS Involvement

You must send a cover letter (memo) with each licensing request.

I. INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM COMPLETION

A. [DSS-5015](#) - FOSTER CARE FACILITY ACTION REQUEST

The form most used for licensing is the Foster Care Facility Action Request (DSS-5015). It must be attached to any set of forms for the Licensing Authority to process your licensing request.

The DSS-5015 connects with the Foster Care Licensing System and generates a license as well as foster care payments for children in the custody of a county departments of social services

Here are some special notes about Form DSS-5015

- The DSS-5015 is required for these licensing actions: new applications, relicenses, transfers, changes, terminations, revocations, and waivers;
- Documents sent to the Licensing Authority without a DSS-5015 will automatically be sent back to you
- The DSS-5015 may be filled in by hand for a new license. Whenever you submit this form, you will receive a “turnaround” DSS-5015 in return. A “turnaround” DSS-5015 is the document printed by the Licensing Authority and sent to the Supervising Agency

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with every licensing action. The turnaround contains preprinted information. Use this form for your next licensing action;

- For any actions other than a new action, mark changes in INK on the turnaround (pre-printed DSS-5015).

Instructions for License Action Request (DSS-5015)

- **Field 1:** Your agency's case number, if you have case numbers for each family. If not, leave blank
- **Field 2:** The county code where the potential foster home is located (please refer to the County Code list found in Appendix A of the Services Information System (SIS) manual located at: <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/rim01/man/SIS.pdf>)

NOTE: On the upper right hand side of the form spaces are provided to indicate the type of licensing action requests. These options are:

- New License
- Change
- Relicense
- Terminate/Revoke
- Waiver Requested
- Relicense/Change
- **Field 3:** Your agency's category: county DSS, public, or private
- **Field 4:** Your agency's name as it appears on your agency's current license or county department of social services
- **Field 5:** Physical address of foster home (a Post Office Box address is not acceptable)
- **Field 6:** Phone number of foster parent applicant
- **Field 7:** First name, middle initial, and then last name of applicant (no nicknames)
- **Field 8:** Applicant's Social Security Number
- **Field 9:** Applicant's birth date
- **Field 10:** Race and Ethnicity codes (please refer to the **Race and Ethnicity Codes** list found in Appendix A of the Services Information System (SIS) manual located at: <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/rim-01/man/SIS.pdf>)

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- **Field 11:** Sex of the applicant
- **Field 12:** Complete the top blanks for last grade completed up to grade 12, OR complete the bottom blanks with post high school years of education
- **Field 13:** Training: must have at least 30 hours for new applications for family foster homes, at least 40 hours for new therapeutic foster homes, and at least 20 hours for relicensing
- **Fields 14-20:** For additional foster parent applicant in the home, complete Fields 7-13 as instructed above for this person
- **Field 21:** Maximum number of foster children that the applicant would be licensed for or accept
- **Field 22:** Sex of foster children the applicant is willing to accept
- **Field 23:** Age of foster children the applicant is willing to accept
- **Field 24:** Maintenance Rate: Leave blank
- **Field 26:** Family income
- **Field 27:** Type of foster care to be provided: select either #1 Foster Care or #5 Therapeutic Foster Care
- **Field 28:** Type of facility: select only #1 Family Foster Home
- **Field 29:** Other household members 18 years of age and older: must have fingerprint clearance for each person listed
- **Fields 30-40:** Licensing Authority use only
- **Field 41:** Leave blank
- **Field 42:** Leave blank

B. DSS-5016 - FOSTER HOME LICENSE APPLICATION

The DSS-5016 is the form that serves as a source of information for the licensing authority to determine whether to approve a license. It also is a contract between the supervising agency, the foster parent and the Licensing Authority. By signing the DSS5016, the foster parents and the supervising agency legally declare all information to be true. Their signatures on the documents are their legal acknowledgement to abide by the licensing rules as set forth in law and regulation. The DSS-5016 becomes a legal contract between the state, which issues the license, the supervising agency that oversees the foster home and the foster parents who care for children.

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The DSS-5016 contains much of the information necessary to determine whether an applicant is an appropriate candidate for a foster care license. It also covers a lot of important information on fostering that needs to be reviewed in detail with applicants. Be sure to complete each field on the form as instructed below. The DSS-5016 is an interactive document available in Microsoft® Word. You will need to use this format rather than the PDF document on the Division of Social Services forms website. Contact the Licensing Authority via e-mail to request a copy. You will receive the form as an attachment that can be downloaded onto any computer that accepts Microsoft® Word documents. Please use this form since the Licensing Office does not accept handwritten applications for relicensure.

The interactive DSS-5016 is straightforward, providing spaces for “yes,” “no,” and “N/A” options for much of the material. For items that require detailed entries, type on the form in the provided spaces. The space will expand to accept as much detail as you wish. The Mutual Home Assessment provides a structure for completing the 12 skills. Use the space provided in this format. It helps to move the packet through the licensing process more quickly. The best format lists the strengths and needs, then lists the behavior or experience that support your observation. For example, “One of the strengths of an agency licensing worker is attention to detail because the social worker must fill in many forms accurately to get a family licensed as a foster home.”

Take time to proof read the completed DSS-5016. Do not leave an item unanswered. Applications with blank items will be returned to the supervising agency. Make sure it has all its attachments. Review the document from the point of view of someone who has never met the applicants.

Instructions for Completing the DSS-5016:

SECTION I. Name, Criminal History, & Background check information

A. Name & Education Level: Provide middle names and all married names of applicants. Please note that you do not need to request waivers for applicants who do not have a high school diploma or a GED. If applicants do not have a high school diploma or GED they must have the ability to read and write as evidenced by administering medications as prescribed by a licensed medical provider, maintain medication administration logs, and maintain progress notes.

B. Others in Household: Provide first, middle and last names of any other people in the household besides the applicants’ children. Also, enter date of birth, gender and relationship to the applicants for each person. For people visiting in the home, make sure they plan to depart within two weeks and have their own residence. Remember that any adult in the home must have a criminal records check including being fingerprinted before the application may be approved.

C. North Carolina Criminal History & Background Check Information: You must list all court findings as they appear in the court documents. This means that specific traffic findings with specific charges and dates must be listed. Do not state “minor traffic offenses,” “nothing serious,” etc. In the explanation of findings section, provide documentation as to why the applicant has criminal charges and what has

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changed to prevent the recurrence of these criminal charges. Background checks must be dated within 180 days of receiving the packet at the Licensing Office.

D. North Carolina Child Abuse Neglect History: Discuss with the applicants any Child Protective Services reports that were investigated on the applicants and any adult household members. If there have been past investigations, discuss what was involved from the applicants' perspective and list approximate dates the investigations occurred. Licensing social workers must submit a completed [DSS-5268](#) showing that the Responsible Individuals List (RIL) has been checked and that the appropriate signatures have been obtained. Private agencies must submit the request to the Division of Social Services (FAX: 919-715-6714 to the attention of "RIL".) The form with signatures of Division of Social Services staff is submitted with the application packet. Public agency licensing social workers are able to access the RIL from their agency and should also complete the section of the DSS-5268 marked for NCDSS office use only. The actual results of the search should be maintained in their agency files. Their signature and date indicates that those results are in their records. The DSS-5268 should be submitted in the application packet.

E. Applicant/Adult Household member have not lived in NC for the past 5 years: Supervising agencies are required to check any child abuse and neglect registry in each state that the prospective foster parent(s) and any other adult(s) living in the home have resided in the preceding five years. These clearance letters/documents are to be sent to the Licensing Office and placed after the signature page of the DSS-5016. This is a federal requirement and there are no exceptions. If a state agency refuses to provide a clearance letter, the foster home cannot be licensed.

F. Have any of the applicants been previously licensed as foster parent? If the family has been previously licensed as foster parents, contact the previous supervising agency for a report on the family and the agency's recommendations concerning the family's ability to provide foster care services. Write a brief summary of what was learned from the previous agency.

G. Do applicants have an in-Home Day (Child) Care? Any applicant babysitting in their home on a regular basis meets the definition of an in-home daycare for licensing purposes. If the applicant uses a calendar to schedule babysitting duties, the applicant is providing regular babysitting services.

SECTION II. Foster Home Qualifications

A. Applicants Own Children in Home: List the full names of all children living in the applicant's home and their relationship to these children (some may be adults now). Include date of birth, gender and education level.

B. Foster Children Presently in Home: List all foster children in the home. A child may have been placed in the home by order of the court. Such placements do not require the home to be licensed. The home may be seeking licensure so that the custodian may receive federal funds for the child's cost of care. In addition, a child

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related to the applicants may be in the home and licensure is sought for financial reasons. Also, list any children placed by an agency in another state. For each foster child in the home, list first name, middle name, date of birth, education level and the date the child was placed in the home.

C. Applicant's Own Children Not in Home: List the first, middle, last name, before marriage, of all of the children the applicant has parented (step, relative, non-related, etc.) who are no longer in the home. List dates of birth and current addresses.

SECTION III. Standards for Licensure

Read all the questions and check the boxes accordingly. Frequently, the Licensing Authority receives DSS-5016s where the licensing worker has checked "YES" to all the questions. Please note that some answers should be "NO" or "N/A." For example, if the agency does not utilize Physical Restraints (Item C), the answer should be "N/A."

A. Client Rights and Care of Children: Make sure that the applicants understand they are agreeing to ensure each of the 23 client rights for each child placed in their home. If the applicant shows any doubt or hesitation about any of the 23 rights, resolve any confusion immediately.

B. Medication: This section of the DSS-5016 is a good review of medications procedures. Go over each item with the applicants before checking the appropriate box.

C. Physical Restraints: Be sure to go over each of the 4 sections in detail and check the appropriate box for each one.

D. Physical Restraints. (Part II Use of chemicals): Pay particular attention to this item. This question has to be answered for every application regardless of whether or not the agency utilizes physical restraints. The answer should always be YES. Foster parents must agree not to use drugs to restrain children.

SECTION IV. Conflict of Interest

This is another instance where some licensing workers automatically check "YES" and the answers could be "NO." If the answer is "YES", your agency must request a waiver.

SECTION V. Day Care Center Operation

If the applicants do not operate a day care center or do not plan to operate a day care center, check "NO" and "N/A" for B1, B2, and B3. If the applicants operate a day care center or plan to operate a day care center check, "YES." If the applicants operate a day care center or plan to operate a day care center the answers to the three questions B1, B2, and B3 should be "YES."

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SECTION VI. Relationship with the Agency:

Review each of these items with the applicants and stress their importance. Encourage them to call you when they feel an estrangement with any agency professional.

SECTION VII. Physical & Environmental Safety

A. **Fire & Building Safety:** Errors on the Foster Home Fire Inspection Report ([DSS-1515](#)) will cause delays in completing the licensing and relicensing process. The only person who may correct this form is the fire inspector who did the initial inspection. Review the finished form for errors and omissions. It takes time to do a fire inspection. Many fire inspectors consider these inspections as a 'courtesy' and will take a long time to redo an inspection. Consider doing a pre-inspection to make sure the home is ready for an inspection. Provide training to foster parents about the importance of each item on the form and the correct answer for each item. Make sure foster parents review the form with the fire inspector before he or she leaves their home. The foster parents should understand that any recommendations made by the fire inspector must be followed in order for the license to receive approval. This includes recommendations regarding telephones to assure that they work properly and consistently in emergencies. If at all possible the foster home licensing worker should also be present when the fire inspector completes his or her inspection.

B. **Health Regulations:** This item documents that the licensing social worker has had a discussion with the applicants about the safety of water in the home.

C. **Environmental Regulations:** This item documents that the signed DSS-5150 Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report has been completed and attached to the application.

D. **Pets:** If this item is checked "YES," provide a detailed explanation of how you know that the animal is safe with children. Include comments about vaccinations, behavior, statements from family and personal observation of the animal around children.

E. Exterior Setting and Safety:

1. It is the responsibility of the licensing social worker to observe the conditions around the home and in the community to make sure there are no hazards or unsafe areas.

2. If there is a pool it must be fenced. If there is a body of water such as a pond or stream, describe the distance away from the home, whether it is visible from the applicant's home, and whether there are any barriers in between the home and the water. Supervision alone is not enough to meet safety requirements. You must consider more than the chronological age of a child when assessing safety factors. What is the maturity level of the child? Are there developmental delays?

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F. Room Arrangements and Environment

1. A description of the home and the setting in which the home is located must be completed. Be as specific and descriptive as you can while keeping the description brief.
2. This item records the licensing social worker's personal observation.
3. Sleeping Arrangements Chart. The application must show enough space and beds for the number of foster children requested in the capacity. Each foster child must have his or her own bed. Futons and day beds cannot be used. Bedrooms cannot be used for dual purposes. List the names of all household members, except prospective foster children, in the bedroom and type of bed where they sleep. For foster children use the initials FC immediately before the type of bed (e.g., FC/twin, FC/crib, FC/queen) in the appropriate bedroom (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) to designate the bedroom and type of bed where the prospective foster child will sleep.
4. This item records the licensing social worker's personal observation.
5. This item records the licensing social worker's personal observation.

SECTION VIII. Training Requirements

A. Pre-Service Training: List the date the pre-service training was completed. If it has been more than two years since the applicants completed pre-service training, they must repeat the training or the supervising agency must review the pre-service requirements and provide documentation that they continue to understand and are able to operationalize the requirements. The requirements are: general orientation to foster care and adoption process; communication skills; understanding the dynamics of foster care and adoption process; separation and loss; attachment and trust; child and adolescent development; behavior management; working with birth families and maintaining connections; Lifebook preparation; planned moves and the impact of disruptions; the impact of placement on foster and adoptive families; teamwork to achieve permanence; cultural sensitivity; confidentiality; and health and safety.

B–H. Additional training requirements: Lists the additional training requirements for family foster care and therapeutic foster care. Please read carefully, and review with applicants to ensure they understand all the training requirements and are willing to participate in the ongoing training requirements in order for them to maintain a foster care license.

SECTION IX. Other

This section documents that the listed items have been signed and given to the applicants.

SECTION X. Criteria for the foster family & mutual home assessment

A. Physical and Mental Health of Applicants: Review the applicant's and household member's forms [DSS-5156](#) and [DSS-5017](#) for any physical or mental

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health conditions noted by the physician or applicant. For physical health conditions answer the 7 questions listed in A1. Answer these questions based on your conversations with the applicants about their health as well as your observations. For mental health conditions answer the 7 questions listed in A2. Answer these questions based on your conversations with the applicants about their health as well as your observations. Attach any notes from the MD, psychologist, therapist or counselor as needed. Questions 3-6 needs to be answered based on the results of background check findings and the information resulting from the licensing social workers thorough social history.

B. Mutual Home Assessment

There are 5 parts to the Mutual Home Assessment.

Part I. Documentation of Family History

A thorough explanation is needed for the 13 items listed under Family History in the appropriate blocks (“Information about Parents and Siblings” to “Day Care Plans”). In the “Marriages and Other Significant Relationships” section, provide detailed information (i.e., more than simply saying “previously married”). Include significant relationships, especially when children are born from these relationships. In the “Parenting Experiences” section, provide more information about whom and how they parented. If they are not parents, describe any important relationships with relative children or other children in youth groups (e.g., Big Brothers & Big Sisters) or church involvement.

You may substitute an adoption pre-placement assessment for the Family History. If selected, indicate this on the DSS-5016 and do not fill in the spaces for the family history. The adoption pre-placement assessment must meet all the rule requirements in [10A NCAC 70H .0405](#).

The adoption pre-placement assessment requires addressing 28 items as follows:

1. the applicants' reasons for wanting to adopt;
2. the strengths and needs of each member of the household;
3. the attitudes and feelings of the family, extended family, and other individuals involved with the family toward accepting adoptive children, and parenting children not born to them;
4. the attitudes of the applicants toward the birth parents and in regard to the reasons the child is in need of adoption;
5. the applicants' attitudes toward child behavior and discipline;
6. the applicants' plan for discussing adoption with the child;
7. the emotional stability and maturity of applicants;

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8. the applicants' ability to cope with problems, stress, frustrations, crises, and loss;
9. the applicants' ability to give and receive affection;
10. the applicants' child-caring skills and willingness to acquire additional skills needed for the child's development;
11. the applicants' ability to provide for the child's physical and emotional needs;
12. whether the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic violation;
13. the strengths and needs of birth children or previously adopted children;
14. the applicant's physical and mental health, including any addiction to alcohol or drugs;
15. financial information provided by the applicant, including property and income;
16. the applicants' personal character references;
17. the applicant's religious orientation, if any;
18. the location and physical environment of the home;
19. the plan for child care if parents work;
20. recommendations for adoption in regard to the number, age, sex, characteristics, and special needs of children who could be best served by the family;
21. any previous request for an assessment or involvement in an adoptive placement and the outcome of the assessment or placement;
22. whether the individual has ever been a respondent in a domestic violence proceeding or a proceeding concerning a minor who was allegedly abused, neglected, dependent, undisciplined or delinquent, and the outcome of the proceeding or whether the individual has been found to have abused or neglected a child or has been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the

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removal of a child or has had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child;

23. documentation of the results of the search of the Responsible Individual's List as defined in [10A NCAC 70A .0102](#) for all adult members of the household that indicates they have not had child protective services involvement resulting in a substantiation of child abuse or serious neglect;

24. whether the applicant has located a parent interested in placing a child for adoption with the applicant, and a brief, non identifying description of the parent and the child;

25. the applicants' age, date of birth, nationality, race and ethnicity;

26. the applicant's marital and family status and history, including the presence of any children born to or adopted by the applicant, and any other children in the household;

27. the applicant's educational and employment history and any special skills; and

28. any additional fact or circumstance that may be relevant to a determination of the applicant's suitability to be an adoptive parent, including the quality of the home environment and the level of functioning of any children in the household.

Part II. Documentation of 12 Skills of Foster Parenting:

The DSS-5016 provides expandable space for entries on each of the twelve skills. Make an entry on strengths and at least one entry on needs. Every person has strengths and every person has needs.

The assessment of the 12 skills must include specific behavioral language. Here is an example of a skill "Helping children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts." A strengthbased statement may read:

"Mrs. Smith knows how to maintain attachments and family and cultural identity".

Then follow with specific examples to support that conclusion.

"For example, Mrs. Smith supports her sister's efforts to keep her adopted niece and nephew connected to their culture of origin by celebrating Vietnamese New Year with them and by preparing Vietnamese food".

A needs-based statement may read,

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“Mrs. Smith realizes that she is not knowledgeable about all cultures of peoples in North Carolina. She is receptive to researching traditions and cultural values of the foster children who come into foster care.”

An example of the skill “communicates effectively and develops successful partnerships” may read like this. The strength-based statement may be,

“Mrs. Smith communicates effectively and develops successful partnership in her church. For example, Mrs. Smith is a deacon in her church and teaches Sunday school. She also uses her skill at work where she is a store manager who leads team meetings and supervises five employees. This worker observed Mrs. Smith practice this skill as an active member of the pre-service group. She asked appropriate questions at the right time and listened to others.”

A needs-based statement may read like this.

“Mrs. Smith has a need to improve her listening skills. Her tendency to jump to conclusions interferes with her listening. She wants to be a better listener and likes training sessions that teach this skill.”

Support your conclusions by describing the applicant’s specific behaviors or the words that she used.

“Mrs. Smith, who lost her grandmother five years ago; says she recovered from the loss through prayer, increased involvement in her church, and by spending additional time in her garden.”

Avoid affective/cognitive language such as “understands,” “knows,” “feels,” and “appreciates” in the examples you give to support your conclusions.

Remember that applicants can demonstrate the 12 skills in ways that do not involve children, such as in their job, volunteer work, or hobbies.

Part III. Assessment of applicant’s willingness to participate in Shared parenting requirements

Provide more information than simply stating the applicant understands and is willing to participate in shared parenting. The applicant uses the first of the twelve parenting skills in addressing the issue of Shared Parenting. The applicant should articulate her/his strengths and needs about working with a child’s biological parents. Be wary of an applicant who cannot name any needs with this task. Shared Parenting is hard emotionally and demands a lot of time. Make sure the applicant is comfortable with this statement.

Part IV. Assessment of applicant’s Financial Ability to provide foster care Give the TOTAL monthly income of applicants and the anticipated TOTAL monthly expenses. There is no need to itemize the income or expenses, just give a grand total. The Licensing Authority asks agencies to pay close attention to the suitability of applicants who are in arrears for child support payments. The income needs to be more than the expenses. Applicants need to be able to absorb the extra financial strain that can come from providing foster care. Unemployment compensation, worker’s compensation, other injury related payments, college scholarships, stipends and loans, G.I. Bill, TANF (Work First) benefits, and etc. are not counted in establishing the household’s income. Any financial resource that is temporary cannot be counted as monthly income. Other forms of income such as social security payments, pensions, railroad retirement payments, annuity payments, or any other ongoing income may be counted.

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Part V. Dates and Locations of (Home Visit, Office Visit, etc.) of contacts with each applicant and family members.

For single applicants the face-to-face interview in the home of the applicant and the face-to-face interview in the agency's office on separate dates meet the requirements of the rule. For two-parent homes, two separate face-to-face interviews with each applicant on different dates as well as two face-to-face joint discussions with both parents have to be arranged. The joint discussions with both parents can occur on the same dates as the separate face-to-face discussions with each parent. For example the licensing social worker may meet separately with one parent at 1:00 PM, separately with another parent at 2:00 PM and then meet jointly with both parents at 3:00 PM. Separate face-to-face interviews with each member of the household 10 years of age and older must be held. Licensing social workers can use their professional judgment in deciding when and where interviews will take place with these individuals.

You will need to list the dates of visits and where the visits were held. You must also list the individuals present at the interviews. Provide the names of the individuals and whether they are an applicant, household member, child or licensing social worker.

Part XI. Recommendation for Licensure

If your agency is not recommending the applicant, do not send an application to the Licensing office.

Signatures indicate the information on the Foster Home License Application has been reviewed, that each person is in agreement with licensure requirements, and that all information is true and accurate. On the signature page, make sure applicant(s), licensing social worker, and director or designee have signed and dated the application. Signatures indicate the information on the application has been reviewed, that each person is in agreement with licensure requirements, and that all information is true and accurate. Signatures of each applicant on the application, the licensing social worker, and the executive director or his or her designee are required. Remember to complete the printed name below each signature area for legibility purposes. If any signatures are missing, the Foster Home License Application will be considered incomplete and will be returned to the supervising agency. Include contact information (phone number and e-mail address), for the licensing social worker.

A Complete New Application Package Contains the Following:

- ⑥ Cover Letter (Memo)
- ⑥ [DSS-5015](#) Foster Care Facility Action Request
- ⑥ [DSS-5016](#) Foster Home License Application
- ⑥ [DSS-1515](#) Foster Home Fire Inspection Report
- ⑥ [DSS-5150](#) Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report
- ⑥ [DSS-5017](#) Medical History Form

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- ⑥ [DSS-5156](#) Medical Evaluation (with completed TB test results included)
- ⑥ [DSS-5268](#) Responsible Individual List (RIL) Information Request
- ⑥ Child Abuse/Neglect Clearance Letters if any household members have resided in states other than North Carolina for the past five years
- ⑥ Fingerprint Clearance Letters for each applicant and household members 18 years of age and older
- ⑥ Letter of support from Agency Director if any household members have criminal convictions
- ⑥ Letter of support from Agency Director if any adult household members have child protective service histories as a perpetrator
- ⑥ [DSS-5199](#) Foster Home Request for Waiver, if applicable

Assemble and mail packet in the Order Above. DO NOT STAPLE, please use paper clips and/or binder clips.

C. [DSS-5157](#) Foster Home Relicense Application

The DSS-5157 is used for relicensing foster homes every two years. This form is an interactive document available in Microsoft® Word. You may use this format rather than the PDF document on the Division of Social Services forms website. Contact the Licensing Authority via e-mail to request a copy. You will receive the form as an attachment that can be downloaded onto any computer that accepts Microsoft® Word documents. Please use this form since the Licensing Office does not accept handwritten applications for relicensure. Most items require checking “YES” or “NO” followed by a place to enter a date.

Instructions for Completing the DSS-5157:

1. **Background Checks:** provides space to record the results of criminal records checks on each person 18 years of age and older who resides in the home. List each incident found on each of the following registries:
 - Local Court Record checked by Agency Staff
 - NC Department of Corrections Offender Information
 - NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry
 - NC Health Care Personnel Registry

Record all findings, even those listed on the initial Foster Home License Application ([DSS-5016](#)). Provide an explanation only for those incidents that have occurred since the DSS-5016 was submitted. Do not list the explanations on the initial DSS5016. Make sure every block is filled in. If there were no findings on a specific registry, note on the respective space for findings. New fingerprint checks are not required.

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2. **North Carolina Child Abuse Neglect History:** provides space to record the results of child abuse or neglect reports on any adult in the family. If there is no history of child abuse or neglect, check the “NO” box. For substantiation, check the “N/A” box. Under “Explanation of finding,” enter “None.”

3. **Complete if new adult members have NOT resided in NC for the last 5 years:** if there are new adult members who have not lived in North Carolina continuously for the last five years AND have not been reported on a previous DSS-5157. This item is to document the child abuse and neglect search in other states and criminal records in other states. This item requires attaching either a letter from other states stating that there is no record of abuse or neglect or a letter from the supervising agency explaining reports in other states. Record previous addresses, dates of residence and date the other states registry was checked.

4–10. Provide spaces to check either “YES,” “NO,” or “N/A.” Do not leave any of these items unchecked.

11. **Total number of children in the home:** provides spaces for entry of the numbers of different category of children. The purpose of this item is to show that capacity rules are met. Note there is no space for the actual number of foster children in the home. The number required for foster children is the number of children for which the home is licensed. Even if the home currently is not being used to care for a foster child, the number for Item 11 is the number listed on the license.

12. **Required forms attached?** Provides space to indicate that the required forms for relicensure are attached; these forms are:

- Ⓒ [DSS-5156](#) Request for Medical Information
- Ⓒ [DSS-5017](#) Medical History Form
- Ⓒ [DSS-1515](#) Foster Home Fire Inspection Report
- Ⓒ [DSS-5150](#) Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report

Make sure each of these forms is signed by the required authority and is filled out completely.

13-14. **Physical and Mental Health:** provides spaces to give updates on physical and mental health issues of all household members since the last licensure period.

15. **Pets:** provides space to list any pets added to the family since initial licensure. The purpose of this rule is to safeguard against a child being injured by a foster family’s pet. Keep this objective in mind as you answer these required questions. If a pet has been added, in the space provided, comment on each of the following items:

- How many pets
- What kinds of pets

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- Breed(s)
- Sizes(s)
- Rabies vaccination
- Length of time in the home
- Reproductive ability (spayed, neutered, etc)
- Incidences of aggression toward humans
- Reaction to strangers
- Results of any evaluation by a pet trainer (if not evaluated, state why)
- Documentation from veterinarian regarding any risks to children
- Any concerns for the safety for children placed in the home

16. Change in employment; provides space to update employment and financial situation since last licensure period.

17-18. Provide space to answer “YES” or “No” about securing signatures on a new discipline agreement and parent/agency agreement. The Supervising Agency keeps signed copies of these two documents on file. They must be dated within six months of the date of the renewal of the license.

19–20. Waivers: If a waiver has been granted previously, indicate in item 16. If the waiver is to be extended or if a new waiver is requested, indicate and attach the form [DSS-5199 Foster Home Request for Waiver](#) form.

Signatures indicate the information on the Foster Home Relicense Application has been reviewed, that each person is in agreement with licensure requirements, and that all information is true and accurate. On the signature page, make sure foster parent(s), licensing social worker, and director or designee have signed and dated the application. Signatures indicate the information on the application has been reviewed, that each person is in agreement with licensure requirements, and that all information is true and accurate. Signatures of each foster parent on the application, the licensing social worker, and the executive director or his or her designee are required. Remember to complete the printed name below each signature area for legibility purposes. If any signatures are missing, the application will be considered incomplete and will be returned to the supervising agency. Include contact information (phone number and e-mail address), for the licensing social worker.

A Complete Relicense Package Contains the Following:

- ⑥ Cover Letter (Memo)
- ⑥ [DSS-5015 Foster Care Facility Action Request](#)
- ⑥ [DSS-5157 Foster Home Relicense Application](#)
- ⑥ [DSS-1515 Foster Home Fire Inspection Report](#)
- ⑥ [DSS-5150 Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report](#)

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- ⑥ [DSS-5017](#) Medical History Form
- ⑥ [DSS-5156](#) Medical Evaluation (TB test not required for relicensure, unless individual is a new household member)
- ⑥ [DSS-5268](#) Responsible Individual List (RIL) Information Request must be done for relicensure if the license has lapsed for more than 30 days.
- ⑥ Child Abuse/Neglect Clearance Letters if any new household members who have resided in states other than North Carolina for the past five years
- ⑥ Fingerprint Clearance Letters if a new household member moves into the home or a child turns 18
- ⑥ Letter of support from Agency Director if any adult household members have child protective service histories as a perpetrator
- ⑥ [DSS-5199](#) Foster Home Request for Waiver, if applicable

D. [DSS-5158](#) Foster Home Transfer Request Application

The [DSS-5158](#) is used for transferring foster home licenses from one supervising agency to another supervising agency. This form is an interactive document available in Microsoft® Word. You may use this format rather than the PDF document on the Division of Social Services forms website. Contact the Licensing Authority via e-mail to request a copy. You will receive the form as an attachment that can be downloaded onto any computer that accepts Microsoft® Word documents. Please use this form since the Licensing Office does not accept handwritten applications for relicensure.

Answer all questions on the form. If there are foster children in the home the parents, guardians or custodians and the Child and Family Team must agree to the child in placement transferring with the family. If the parents, guardians, custodians or Child and Family Team do not agree to the transfer, the child can be placed in another foster home supervised by the current agency and the foster home license can be transferred to the receiving agency.

Signatures indicate the information on the Foster Home Transfer Application has been reviewed, and that each person is in agreement with the transfer, and that all information is true and accurate. On the signature page, make sure foster parent(s), licensing social worker, and director or designee of both the receiving and current supervising agencies have signed and dated the application. Signatures of each foster parent on the application, the licensing social worker, and the executive director or his or her designee of both the receiving and current supervising agencies are required. Remember to complete the printed name below each signature area for legibility purposes. If any signatures are missing, the application will be considered incomplete and will be returned to the receiving supervising agency. Include contact information (phone number and e-mail address) of the licensing social worker.

Things to Remember:

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- The signatures of the foster parents, social worker and Executive Director/Designee of both the current and receiving supervising agencies are required.
- The receiving supervising agency shall gather all required information and send as one single packet to the Licensing Authority.
- The transfer will usually become effective the first day of the month following the receipt of the correct packet.
- The current agency is responsible for providing services to the foster children, their families and foster parents until the Licensing Authority approves the transfer.
- The current agency is responsible for payments to the foster parents until the Licensing Authority approves the transfer.
- No additional foster children shall be placed in the home until the transfer is approved.
- If a change is being requested at the time of transfer, a Change Request Application must also be submitted.

A Complete Transfer Package Contains the Following:

- ⑥ Cover Letter (Memo) from the Receiving Agency
- ⑥ [DSS-5015](#) Foster Care Facility Action Request from the **current** agency
- ⑥ [DSS-5015](#) Foster Care Facility Action Request from the **receiving** agency
- ⑥ [DSS-5158](#) Foster Home Transfer Request Application

E. [DSS-5159](#) Foster Home Change Request Application

The DSS-5159 is used for making changes in the foster home license during a licensure period. This form is an interactive document available in Microsoft® Word. You may use this format rather than the PDF document on the Division of Social Services forms website. Contact the Licensing Authority via e-mail to request a copy. You will receive the form as an attachment that can be downloaded onto any computer that accepts Microsoft® Word documents.

This form is used to update a current license by requesting changes in capacity, gender, age range, household composition, physical structure or location of the home. This form is also used to change a family foster home to a therapeutic foster home and a therapeutic foster home to a family foster home.

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Instructions for completing the DSS-5159:

Complete the first part of the form, listing the name of the home and home facility number found on the DSS-5015.

1. **Change Capacity:** provides for changing the capacity of the home. Enter the requested capacity in the space provided.
2. **Number of Children in the Home:** provides spaces for the number of all children in the foster home.
3. **Document Sleeping Arrangements:** provides for updating the sleeping arrangements. Use the spaces provided to list the type of bed and the person who uses the bed.
4. **Change Child Age Range from:** provides a way to change the age range of children the home accepts. This item may need to be changed for financial reimbursement purposes.
5. **Change in Address:** covers changes in the home and its environments. It has six components. Make sure the sleeping arrangement chart in Item 3 is accurate. Briefly describe the floor plan and layout of the new home. Check “YES” or “NO” for certifying that children in care have a private place for dressing and undressing. Check “YES” or “NO” for the question pertaining to access to water. If the answer is “NO,” use the space provided to explain how the child will be kept safe from such hazards. Item 5 also provides spaces to indicate that the required DSS-1515 Foster Home Fire Inspection Report and the required DSS-5150 Foster Home

Environmental Conditions Report have been completed on the new home and that the signed documents are included in the packet. Make sure that these two forms are complete and signed by the appropriate authorities.

6. **When adding to the household, complete the following:** provides space to document a new household member (adults, adopted children, relative children, and biological children) to be added to the household if they are not foster children. There is space to write the person’s name, social security number and relationship to the licensed foster parent(s). This new member must meet all the initial requirements required of any adult member of the household. Make sure that all the required documents are completed and attached to the DSS 5159.
7. **Foster Home License Status Change:** provides a space to indicate that the foster home wishes to change from therapeutic foster care status to family foster care status or vice versus. A change from family foster care to therapeutic foster care requires the foster parent(s) to complete an additional ten hours of training before being classified as a therapeutic foster home. There is a space to enter the date that the supervising agency certifies that this training has been completed.

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8. Remove Foster Parent from license: provides space to document that a foster parent has left the home. Enter the name of the foster parent, document the reason the foster parent left the home and secure the foster parent's signature on the signature page.

9. Remove Adult Household Member from license: provides space to document that an adult has left the household. Enter the name of the adult household member and the reason for leaving the home. The signature of the adult is not required.

10. Other: provides space to indicate a change in information has been made on the DSS-5015 Foster Care Facility Licensing Action Request Form. Provide a reason for the change. Make sure you make the change on the DSS-5015.

Instructions for Requesting a Waiver for Capacity

- Complete Items 1, 2, and 3 on Form DSS-5159
- Complete Form DSS-5199 (Foster Home Request for Waiver)
- Under Rationale for supporting this waiver request indicate:

(1) that the increase in capacity will allow siblings to remain together; (2) indicate that the social worker has verified that the out-of-home family services agreement and/or person-centered-plan for each sibling specifies that the siblings should be placed together; (3) describe the skill, stamina and ability the foster parents have to care for the children and discuss any special needs or strengths of children in the home.

The signature of the Social Worker is the only signature required for a change unless a waiver is requested. If a waiver is requested the signatures of the foster parents, social worker and agency director or designee must be obtained.

1. A Complete Change Package Contains the Following:

- ⑥ Cover Letter (Memo)
- ⑥ DSS-5015 Foster Care Facility Action Request
- ⑥ DSS-5159 Foster Home Change Request Application
- ⑥ DSS-1515 Foster Home Fire Inspection Report (if change in address)
- ⑥ DSS-5150 Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report (if change in address)
- ⑥ DSS-5017 Medical History Form (if new household member)

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- ⑥ DSS-5156 Medical Evaluation (with completed TB test results included) (if new household member)
- ⑥ DSS-5268 Responsible Individual List (RIL) Information Request (if new household member)
- ⑥ DSS-5199 Foster Home Request for Waiver (if requesting waiver for capacity)
- ⑥ Child Abuse/Neglect Clearance Letters if new household members have resided in states other than North Carolina for the past five years
- ⑥ Fingerprint Clearance Letters for each new household member who is 18 years of age and older
- ⑥ Letter of support from Agency Director if new household members have criminal convictions
- ⑥ Letter of support from Agency Director if new adult household members have child protective service histories as a perpetrator

F. DSS-5160 Foster Home Termination Application

The DSS-5160 is used to terminate a foster home license. This form is an interactive document available in Microsoft® Word. You may use this format rather than the PDF document on the Division of Social Services forms website. Contact the Licensing Authority via e-mail to request a copy. You will receive the form as an attachment that can be downloaded onto any computer that accepts Microsoft® Word documents.

Instructions for completing the DSS-5160:

1. Terminate this license effective: is the requested termination date. Depending on the circumstances the Licensing Authority may not be able to honor this request.
2. Reason for the termination: is the reason the termination is being requested.
3. If foster parent(s) is not available for signature: addresses if the foster parent is NOT available to sign. If the foster parent does not sign the DSS-5160, use this section to document attempts to secure the signature. Use the space provided to record efforts to secure the signature. For example, the text may read:

Asked Ms. Foster to sign a DSS-5160 on May 2, 2011. She refused. I sent Ms. Foster a letter on May 15, 2011 requesting signature on DSS-5160. No reply. On May 20, 2011 I called Ms. Foster requesting her to sign a DSS-5160. She hung up on me.

The signatures of the Foster Parent(s) and Social Worker are the only signatures required for a termination.

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A Complete Termination Package Contains the Following:

- ⑥ Cover Letter (Memo)

- ⑥ DSS-5015 Foster Care Facility Action Request

- ⑥ DSS-5160 Foster Home Termination Application

Use the DSS-5160 when the license is being terminated, not when it is being revoked. A revocation does not require the foster parent's signature. A termination presumes that ending of the license is a mutual agreement between the foster parent and the supervising agency and not a failure to comply with licensing requirements. If the license is being revoked, use the DSS form 5279 Request for a Revocation of a Foster Home License.

G. DSS-1515 Foster Home Fire Inspection Report

The licensing social worker does not fill out the Foster Home Fire Inspection Report (DSS-1515). The local fire inspector or his /her designee must do this. Developing a good working relationship with the fire safety inspector makes the licensing process easier on the foster parents, on the fire inspector and on the licensing social worker. The fire inspector's written approval of all items on the DSS-1515 is required for licensure. An error on this form often results in lengthy delays because the fire inspector has to make a second trip to the home. Make sure you and the foster parents are familiar with the items on the DSS-1515.

The DSS-1515 is an interactive form providing fields for typed information. Complete the top part and then print the form twice for the fire inspector to complete. Ask the inspector to sign the form twice, providing a signed copy for licensure packet and a signed copy for the foster parent. Although the licensing social worker does not have to be present for the fire inspector to go through the home, it is advisable that they are present. By being present, the licensing social worker can note any items out of compliance and set a date for the infraction to be corrected and the fire inspector to return.

Instructions for completing the DSS-1515:

- Fill in the name of the foster home. Usually the name(s) of the foster parents are sufficient. For example, "The Mr. and Mrs. Smith Foster Home.

- The foster parent present at the inspection is the person in charge of the home.

- The address is the physical address of the foster home.

- The phone number is the number of the telephone used by the foster home.

- If the home uses extension cords, they must have the Underwriters laboratory seal on the cord. The cord may be used only for a specific device. Be careful using surge protectors. Some people use surge protectors as an

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extension from the wall socket and overload these devices. If in doubt, take a picture and show it to the fire inspector before the inspection. If the home does not use extension cords at all, there is space to mark “Not Applicable” (N/A).

Unless the home is heated with electricity and does not have a fireplace, the home must have an operating CO₂ detector. It is usually a square box like device plugged into a wall socket or hardwired into the home. If the home has a heat pump, make sure it is not connected to a furnace for dual heating. More furnaces use natural gas. In such circumstances, a CO₂ detector is required.

- Make sure the fire extinguisher is mounted on the wall or attached in a conspicuous place. It is not acceptable to have the device loose on a counter or stored in a drawer.
- Check the evacuation plan and the list of emergency numbers. Are they legible? Are they protected from getting wet and smearing? These documents are to be displayed on a permanent basis.
- Ask the foster parents how they plan to ensure that they have phone service even in periods of electrical failure. The intent of this rule is for the home to be able to contact emergency services any time of day or night. Some types of phones including cell phones have inconsistent service in some locations. This can cause incorrect information to be relayed to emergency service units. All recommendations made by fire inspectors must be followed in relation to the type of phone used.
- For Item 6, determine the age of the house and advise the fire inspector.
- Inform the foster parents not to store anything in hallways, stairwells or on outside steps. Not even pieces of paper may be kept on the stairs.
- Make sure no designated egress doors have key operated inside deadbolts. This is a hard and fast rule. Although latches on the inside of some doors may be a security concern, key operated inside deadbolt locks are dangerous in a fire.
- List primary heat source and any secondary heat source. The primary heat source usually is the one that covers the entire house. A secondary heat source may be a fireplace or space heaters. If the family uses such items in the winter, advise the fire inspector.
- In some instances the inspector may leave Item 11 blank. If corrections are listed, try to set a time for the additional visit.

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- The fire inspector must sign the form. The foster parent present must sign the form. If these two signatures are not on the form, the entire licensing packet will be returned.

Confirm with your local fire department whether foster families should schedule inspections directly with them, or whether you should coordinate them for all foster families from your agency.

- Be sure the form is signed and dated by the fire inspector.
- If any items on the DSS-1515 are marked “No” the home cannot be licensed until these items are corrected. In order to approve the home all items on the DSS-1515 have to be answered “Yes” or “N/A.” Even when the item is marked “Yes,” any suggestions for corrections made by the fire inspector must be addressed in order for the Licensing Authority to approve the license.

H. DSS-5150 Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report

The supervising agency licensing social worker completes and signs the DSS-5150 Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report. The DSS-5150 documents home conditions necessary for the safe care of children. It consists of twelve requirements for the home. The DSS-5150 is available on line.

The form is interactive providing text spaces that can expand when additional descriptions may be need. It may be filled out online and then printed for official signatures. The licensing social worker and the foster parents sign the form. Licensing packets with an unsigned DSS-5150 will be returned unprocessed.

Instructions for Completing the DSS-5150:

- Explosives must be stored under lock and key; the detonators must be secured in a separate location. Firearms must be stored under lock and key with the ammunition secured separately. The keys to such storage must not be easily obtainable for children. Securing a firearm in the glove box or trunk of an automobile is not acceptable. If the applicant is in a line of work where immediate access to a loaded firearm is necessary, the home is not appropriate for the care of children.
- The yard must be safe. Examine the yard for excess brush, for uncontained trash or dilapidated equipment or vehicles.
- Look for evidence of rodents or insects. Rodents leave small pellet droppings. Ants often build mounds on the ground outside close to windows. Ask about pest control measures. Homes that tolerate rodents and insects inside the house are not safe for children.
- If a window or door opens to the outside, it must have a screen on it.

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Homes with windows designed not to open do not have to have screens. The screens must be in good repair. Look for tears or small holes in screens that may allow insects to enter.

Make sure the kitchen appliances actually operate. Look inside the oven. Would you eat something cooked in the oven?

- Check the kitchen. Are there place settings for each person in the family, including the number of foster children? Are there enough plates, cups, saucers, and glasses for the family? Is there a table sufficient for the family to all sit down together for a meal? Are there enough chairs to do this?
- Check each piece of furniture, especially any items covered with slipcovers. Look for tears in fabric and upholstery. Check chairs and tables to make sure they do not wiggle and are secure.
- Check the storage of dangerous chemicals, paints, and cleaning supplies. Are they child accessible? Are they locked up so a curious child could not get to them?
- Make sure the cooling system can handle very hot weather and make sure the heating system can handle very cold winters.
- Check the toilet, hand sink, and bath/shower to make sure each one works. Make sure the sink and the bath/shower has hot water. If the bathroom does not have a window that opens, make sure the room is equipped with an exhaust fan. This is necessary for health and safety. Exhaust fans control moisture to prevent mildew and mold.
- The discussion about water quality should include asking about any history of problems with water quality or sanitation. Ask about water testing that has been done. Check to be sure that the home has running water and clean toilet and bathing facilities.
- The discussion about building code issues is to make sure the building complies with code in force when the house was built. Just because the house is 50 years old does not mean it is in disrepair. You can access the NC Building Code at (<http://www.ncdoi.com>). Ask about and look for any problems with systems such as heating, plumbing, septic, or electric.
- Ask about and look for any structural problems with the home, such as a leaking roof or crumbling foundation. Ask about and look for any problems with systems such as heating, plumbing, septic, or electric. Inspect the yard, looking for potential dangers (such as dense brush, excessive or uncovered trash, etc.). Children need to be able to go outside and play safely.

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- Use the recommendations and comments section to describe the most outstanding aspect of house and its grounds. Be specific and help the

Licensing Authority understand that there are no child safety issues with this home.

- A thorough environmental assessment includes the yard as well as the interior and exterior structure of the foster home. Check yard for hazards. Any water source must be behind a fence. A pool must be fenced. A fence must block access from the yard to a river, stream, lake, ocean, sound, or other body of water. Their needs to be a safe, fenced play area provided if a dangerous object or hazard couldn't be fenced.

I. [DSS-5017](#) Medical History Form

The DSS-5017 Medical History Form is a self-reporting form. Each adult in the home completes this form for himself or herself. Parents complete a form for each child. Alternatively, licensing social workers can interview the applicant to complete this form, which would provide additional opportunity for assessment and relationship building. Anyone who becomes a member of the household after licensure must complete this form. Foster parents should share this form with their medical provider who will complete the Medical Evaluation ([DSS-5156](#)). The family medical provider should know about the items listed on the DSS-5017. If the applicant/foster parent does not want his/her medical provider to know something about their health, inquire further. Any physical or mental health issues identified by the applicants and household members must be explained and discussed on Items X.A.(1) and X.A.(2) of the [DSS-5016](#). At relicensure any physical or mental health issues identified by the foster parents or household members must be explained and discussed on Items 13 and 14 of the [DSS-5157](#).

J. [DSS-5156](#) Medical Evaluation (with completed TB test results included) The DSS-5156 must be completed on everyone in the home within 12 months of the initial licensing date and within 12 months of each relicensure period. Be sure that the agency name is completed at the top of the form. The foster parent applicant and other adult members of the household must sign and date the form, and write in the medical provider's name.

All household members 18 years of age and older must have a TB test within 12 months of the initial licensing except for the birth children of the foster parents. However, if one of the foster parents tests positive for TB, the birth children must be tested also. If an applicant or household member knows they will test positive and has been x-rayed to show they do not have the disease, ask that person to get a statement from a medical provider explaining this. With sufficient medical documentation, this adult may not have to be tested. TB tests are only required one time unless the medical provider determines that subsequent tests are necessary. A place for documenting the TB test is included on this form. However, a separate document from a licensed medical provider is also acceptable. A licensed medical provider (e.g., a doctor of medicine, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner) must sign and date the 5156.

If anyone 18 years of age or older moves into the home after a license has been issued, that new household member must have a DSS-5156 completed by a medical provider and be tested for TB. Any physical or mental health issues identified by the medical provider must be explained and discussed on

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Item X, A, 1 and 2 of the DSS-5016. At relicensure any physical or mental health issues identified by the medical provider must be explained and discussed on Items 13 and 14 of the [DSS-5157](#).

K. [DSS-5268](#) Responsible Individual List (RIL) Information Request

The DSS-5268 is used for supervising agencies to request information from the Responsible Individual List (RIL). This form must be completed on each foster parent applicant and all adult household members. Make sure the applicants and adult household members sign the form. Private agencies must Fax the form to 919-7156714 and to the attention of “RIL” in order to obtain results. County departments of social services have direct access to the RIL and will need to establish internal processes to review the RIL. County departments of social services must complete the section of the DSS-5268 marked for NCDSS office use only. For additional information, please refer to Appendix 1 CPS Data Collection in the [NC Child Welfare manual](#).

L. [DSS-5280](#) Notice Foster Home Mandatory Criminal History Check

The DSS-5280 provides information to applicants about the criminal history check procedures and the applicant’s rights if unsatisfied with the results and subsequent licensing actions. Have the applicant sign the form at the bottom and give the applicant a copy of the form. Keep the signed copy in the agency’s file on the family.

M. [DSS-5199](#) Foster Home Request for Waiver

The DSS-5199 is used to document a request to waive a foster home licensing rule ([10A NCAC 70E](#)). Administrative rules related to waivers are found in [10A NCAC 70L .0102](#).

Waivers cannot be granted for any rule based on a standard adopted by the Building Code Council and subject to the general supervision and enforcement of the Commissioner of Insurance; any rule governing fire safety; or any rule based upon a standard adopted by the Commission for Public Health. All of the sections of the form must be completed. Denials of waiver requests by the Licensing Authority are not subject to appeal rights.

N. [DSS-5279](#) Request for Revocation of a Foster Home License

The DSS-5279 is used to document a request to revoke a foster home license. Before completing this form you may want to contact the Licensing Authority and discuss the revocation issues with a Program Consultant. The consultant will provide assistance in completing the form. The final decision to proceed with the revocation of a foster home license is made by the Licensing Authority.

O. [DSS-5281](#) Critical Incident Reporting Form

The DSS-5281 is used to report critical incidents to the Licensing Authority.

P. [DSS-5282](#) Notification of CPS Involvement

The DSS-5282 is used to notify the North Carolina Division of Social Services, Licensing Authority, the Division of Child Development and Early Education and the Division of Health Service Regulation of child protective services issues related to the facilities they regulate. The Division of Social Services has regulatory authority over family foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, and maternity homes, and Level I group homes.

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A list of maternity homes licensed by the Division of Social Services is available at:

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/agency-listings>

A list of group homes licensed by the Division of Social Services is available at:

(<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/licensing/docs/rccfacilities.pdf>). <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/agency-listings>

Things to remember when submitting documents and forms to the Licensing Authority:

- Cover Letter: Always send with each packet.
- A [DSS-5015](#) must be submitted with each licensure request.
- Documents and Forms: Make sure all fields and sections are complete.
- All documents must be dated within 180 days of receipt of the packet by the Licensing Authority. There is one exception to the 180-day rule. Medical Evaluations ([DSS-5156](#)) must be dated within 12 months of receipt of the Medical Evaluation by the Licensing Authority.
- If there is a criminal history and/or a CPS history, a letter of advocacy signed by the Director or Agency Head will be needed. It should state the agency's position regarding licensure of the individual, how they have overcome any negative history, and their ability to provide safe, nurturing care for children in foster care.
- All forms and documents must be dated.
- Remember to get required signatures.