



South Carolina Department of Social Services

Child Welfare Services Manual

760.1 Home Visits & Foster Family Contacts

Effective Date: 07-21-2016

Purpose Statement:

Foster families are important partners in the agency's mission to provide for the safety and wellbeing for all children in its care. Accordingly, the agency is committed to supporting and monitoring foster families through regular contacts and assessments. This section sets forth the policies and procedures to be followed by licensing staff when making home visits and other contacts with foster families.

Policy:

- A. Race, color, national origin, religion, state of residence, age, disability, political belief, sex, or sexual orientation shall not be considered in making a determination regarding the management of a foster family license. Further, culture may not be used as a proxy for these factors in making such decisions.
- B. Foster Family and Licensing Support staff shall make face-to-face contact with all foster families monthly for the first three months the home is licensed, and at least quarterly thereafter, to support the family and confirm ongoing compliance with standards of care.
- C. The agency will recognize foster families as partners in the care of children who are separated from their own families because of abuse or neglect.
- D. Foster families are required to exercise the reasonable and prudent parent standard when making decisions about foster child activities in order to facilitate age- and developmentally-appropriate opportunities for growth and development.
- E. All licensing personnel are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Immediately upon receiving an allegation of abuse or neglect, agency staff shall make a report by telephone or in-person contact to the OHAN unit. Staff shall cooperate with the OHAN unit and shall take appropriate action based on the information obtained during the OHAN process.
- F. Communications from or about foster families will be answered within 24 hours (or within the next business day) of receipt.

Procedures:

- A. Initial Visits After Licensure
 - 1. The State Office Initial Licensing Unit shall notify the Regional Program Coordinator for Foster Family and Licensing Support (FFALS) on the date each new license is approved for the region. The Program Coordinator (or team leader) will assign the family to a Family Support Coordinator (FSC) who serves the county in which the

home is located.

2. Within two business days of the license approval, the Initial Licensing Coordinator and the FSC shall make a joint visit to the home for introductions and presentation of the license to the family. It is preferred, but not required, that all family and household members be present for this meeting. The FSC shall provide the family with a “welcome packet” of information which will include, at a minimum:
 - a. The Standards of Care for fostering in South Carolina;
 - b. The Foster Parent Bill of Rights;
 - c. Information and contacts for services provided by the DSS such as SC Voucher Program for Child Care, SNAP, and FI;
 - d. A map of SC’s Health Service Regions with contacts’ phone numbers;
 - e. Contact phone numbers and email addresses of the region’s county DSS offices to include the County Director, Program Coordinators for Economic Services and Human Services, and supervisors responsible for foster care;
 - f. Contact phone numbers and email addresses of the Regional FFALS unit;
 - g. Information about the SC Foster Parent Association;
 - h. Information about quarterly visits and what the family can expect during them;
 - i. Information about training opportunities;
 - j. Registration information for Shared Parenting training occurring within the first 3 months of the licensure (the parents will be expected to attend);
 - k. Information and phone numbers about community resources such as WIC, babynet, Medicaid, law enforcement, libraries, mental health offices, etc.; and
 - l. Court actions and definitions that occur during the life of a foster care case.
3. The initial visit with the family shall be used as an opportunity to answer questions and to establish a trusting relationship with the foster family. Each encounter a foster family has with the agency is to be met with a customer friendly and helpful attitude.
4. The FSC shall make two subsequent monthly home visits to continue to support any questions or concerns the foster family has regarding upcoming, past, or present placements of children in the home. The FSC shall identify training resources that will address deficiencies of knowledge or to enhance current skills, with the goal of enabling the family to offer excellent care to foster children.
5. The family shall be reminded at all visits of the need to immediately notify the FSC of any changes to the home or its residents, including, but not limited to:
 - a. significant changes in family income;
 - b. plans to open a home-based business (including day care);
 - c. any structural changes for their home;
 - d. plans for changes of residence;
 - e. a change in marital status; and
 - f. the addition of any resident in the home.
6. If any changes have been made since the license was issued, the FSC shall take appropriate action (note that foster children may be removed from a licensed home while it pends reassessment due to changes).
 - a. In all circumstances of significant change, the Foster Care worker for a child placed in the home must be notified so a decision can be made whether or not to allow the child(ren) to remain in the home as new assessments are conducted.
 - b. If a family moves to a different home, the license is not transferrable. Both fire or safety and health or sanitation inspections must be requested, conducted, and passed.

- c. If there are structural changes to a licensed home, both fire or safety and health or sanitation inspections must be requested, conducted, and passed.
 - d. If a person over the age of 18 moves into the home, background checks must be obtained in accordance with [Section 740: Intake & Background Checks](#).
 - e. If the foster parents separate or divorce, the impact on the home and financial supports shall be reviewed. If the separation or divorce is the result of spousal abuse, additional information such as police reports will be required.
 - f. If the family opens a home-based business, its nature and impact on the home's physical environment and residents must be evaluated. If the business is a daycare, the DSS Division of Early Care and Education shall be notified.
- 7. The third monthly home visit shall include a discussion of Shared Parenting and the expectations of the agency for foster families to participate in both the training and the practice. If one or both parents have not scheduled to attend the training, they should be advised to complete it prior to the first quarterly visit. The FSC shall provide a schedule of upcoming training dates, if needed.
 - 8. All communications with or about families, including face-to-face encounters, correspondence via mail, e-mail, telephone, or text shall be documented in the CAPSS License screen using the dictation code appropriate for the activity.

B. Initial Contacts After Placement or Removal

- 1. Within 48 hours (or two business days) of a child's placement in a home, the family's FSC shall make contact to confirm that the child's transition into the home is smooth. If the family requires services or assistance to maintain new (or any) placements, the FSC shall consult with his or her team leader and any designated foster care staff to determine specific availability and appropriateness of referrals. Services to preserve placement may include, but shall not be limited to:
 - a. Day care or afterschool care;
 - b. Counseling (for the child or the foster family);
 - c. Respite care;
 - d. Accelerated board rate;
 - e. A behavior modification or interventionist;
 - f. Independent living program services (see [Section 530: John H. Chafee Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood](#));
 - g. Homemaker services; and/or
 - h. Foster family peer support.
- 2. The post-placement contact should be used to determine that the foster parent has all information needed (or available) about the newly-placed child. This includes (at a minimum) the following:
 - a. The name and contact information of the child's Foster Care worker and his or her team leader;
 - b. The child's Medical and Education Passport (the foster parent should be instructed on its use if not already familiar);
 - c. A Family Team Meeting or Child Conference date and time (if the child has recently been brought into care);
 - d. The child's Medicaid number, Medicaid card, and birth certificate (if available);
 - e. All doctor and dentist appointments (with transportation to and from established);
 - f. Any special dietary, religious, and medical needs of the child;
 - g. Information necessary to exercise the reasonable and prudent parent

standard for determining age- and developmentally- appropriate activities for the child;

- h. Upcoming court dates;
- i. The child's Guardian ad Litem's name and contact information;
- j. An understanding of the child's permanency plan; and
- k. Information necessary for enrollment in child care or for child care vouchers.

- 3. Within five business days of a child's removal from a home, the family's FSC shall make contact to assess the family for grief or loss symptoms, determine the need for services, and evaluate the family's readiness for a new placement.
- 4. All communications with or about families, including face-to-face encounters, correspondence via mail, e-mail, telephone, or text shall be documented in the CAPSS License screen using the dictation code appropriate for the activity.

C. Ongoing Quarterly Visits

- 1. During the sixth month following license issuance, the FSC shall make the first of ongoing quarterly visits to the foster home. The visits are intended to confirm compliance with foster home Standards of Care as well as to determine the safety and wellbeing of children placed in the home. Both foster parents, if applicable, are required to be present for these visits. The results of observations and interviews while at the home shall be captured on [DSS Form 30244: Quarterly Home Visit Guide](#), as follows.
 - a. Current Placements: The FSC shall discuss and make note of any questions or concerns related to current foster children in the home. He or she shall review the items for which information should have already been provided (see above). If the parent is lacking one or more of the items, the Foster Care worker shall be contacted.
 - b. Current Household Composition: The FSC shall determine if there have been changes to the residents of the household (not to include foster children). If a child of the home has turned 18 or anyone over the age of 18 has joined the household, background checks must be completed in accordance with [Section 740: Intake & Background Checks](#).
 - c. Safety Issues: The FSC shall complete the form as required, through observation when applicable, and shall interview with foster parents and children otherwise.
 - d. Foster Family Functioning and Interaction with Agency and Biological Family: The FSC shall discuss and notate any changes to the health or livelihood of any resident of the home. The foster parents' relationship with the foster care workers should be discussed and any concerns noted. The foster parents' understanding of and participation in reasonable and prudent parenting and Shared Parenting should be given in detail, including activities in which the foster and biological families have participated since the last quarterly visit. Section II, item 6 should specifically include activities in which the child has participated to confirm that the family is applying the principles of reasonable and prudent parenting (see [Section 760.3: Reasonable and Prudent Parenting](#) for guidance regarding this standard).
 - e. Training: The FSC shall verify the completion of training hours. Copies of training certificates shall be obtained during the quarterly visit. If the foster parent has concerns about the quality or availability of training, the FSC will make note and discuss the issue with the FSC's team leader.
 - f. Placement Preferences: The FSC shall determine if there is additional training or information that could be provided to the foster parents that would encourage the acceptance of children whose behaviors or situations are outside of their

original preferences.

- g. Observations of foster child/foster family interactions: Each encounter with foster children is an opportunity for agency staff to assess for child safety and wellbeing. It is important that the FSC understands the nature of the relationship between foster child and the family in the home. While it is not necessary for the FSC to interview foster children alone, the practice could identify problems in the home not otherwise observable, especially if the child appears to be hesitant or overly affectionate with the foster parent or member of the family. Foster parents shall be asked how they apply the principles of reasonable and prudent parenting by encouraging age- and developmentally-appropriate activities for each child in their home (see [Section 760.3: Reasonable and Prudent Parenting](#) for guidance regarding this standard).
 - h. Confidentiality and Signatures: These sections shall be answered and signed as appropriate.
 - i. Three Column Mapping: The FSC shall facilitate a “mapping” discussion with the family and ask, “What is Going Well,” “What are the Concerns,” and “What are Next Steps?” The FSC shall annotate the details of the mapping for inclusion in the foster family record and CAPSS dictation.
2. The family shall be reminded at all visits of the need to immediately notify the FSC of any changes to the home or its residents, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Significant changes in family income;
 - b. Plans to open a home-based business (including day care);
 - c. Any structural changes for their home;
 - d. Plans for changes of residence;
 - e. A change in marital status; and
 - f. The addition of any resident in the home.
3. If any changes have been made since the license was issued, the FSC shall take appropriate action (note that foster children may be removed from a licensed home while it pends reassessment due to changes).
 - a. In all circumstances of significant change, the Foster Care worker for a child placed in the home must be notified so a decision can be made whether or not to allow the child(ren) to remain in the home as new assessments are conducted.
 - b. If a family moves to a different home, the license is not transferrable. Both fire or safety and health or sanitation inspections must be requested, conducted, and passed.
 - c. If there are structural changes to a licensed home, both fire or safety and health or sanitation inspections must be requested, conducted, and passed.
 - d. If a person over the age of 18 moves into the home, background checks must be obtained in accordance with Section 740.
 - e. If the foster parents separate or divorce, the impact on the home and financial supports shall be reviewed. If the separation or divorce is the result of spousal abuse, additional information such as police reports will be required.
 - f. If the family opens a home-based business, its nature and impact on the home’s physical environment and residents must be evaluated. If the business is a day care, the DSS Division of Early Care and Education shall be notified.
4. At the conclusion of the quarterly visit, the FSC shall set the appointment for the next

visit.

5. Any concerns, questions, or needs that were discovered during a quarterly visit (or other communication with foster parents) that are specifically related to a foster child must be brought to the attention of the child's Foster Care worker or team leader. This includes any complaints about the worker's visits, visitation with the child's family, and child's behavior after visitation with family, Guardian ad Litem, etc. The FSC shall email the foster care worker and supervisor immediately after notification of the concerns.
6. All communications with or about families, including face-to-face encounters, correspondence via mail, e-mail, telephone, or text shall be documented in the CAPSS License screen using the dictation code appropriate for the activity.

Special Considerations:

A. Licensing Complaint Concerning a Foster Parent

1. Upon receiving a complaint of a license violation by a foster parent, the FSC shall staff the complaint with his or her supervisor to determine what actions or steps are necessary.
2. The FSC shall schedule a visit with the foster family to occur within five working days.
3. Upon completion of the evaluation regarding the violation, the FSC shall inform the foster parent by letter of the outcome and file a copy in the licensing record.
4. If the licensing complaint is verified and the problem is satisfactorily resolved, the FSC shall:
 - a. Confirm that the foster parent takes necessary and adequate remedial action (and assist if necessary);
 - b. Discuss the remedial action plan and its ongoing status with his or her team leader;
 - c. Document in writing the satisfactory completion of remedial action by letter to the foster parent;
 - d. Put a copy of the letter in the licensing record; and
 - e. Send a copy of the letter to the Foster Care worker or State Office, depending on whether the complaint comes from that source.
5. If the licensing complaint is verified and the problem is not satisfactorily resolved, the FSC shall:
 - a. Discuss the situation with the FSC's team leader; and
 - b. Amend the current license to reflect the situation; or
 - c. In extreme cases, take steps to revoke the license and close the home.
6. The FSC shall keep the Foster Care worker of each child in the foster home informed of the situation and of any actions that may be needed on behalf of the child, including the possibility of removal if the license is revoked.

Documentation:

- Contacts with foster family and child Correspondence with agency staff
- Supporting information regarding license determinations
- Copies of OHAN investigation documents

Legal Citations:**Multi-Ethnic Placement Act & Interethnic Adoption Provisions**

- 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(18): general mandates
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 622(b)(7): diligent recruitment
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 674 & 45 C.F.R. § 1355.38: enforcement
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 1996b: Title VI violation
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 2000a et seq.: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act

- 29 U.S.C.A. § 794: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- 29 U.S.C.A. § 705(20)-(21): Section 504 definition of disability
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 12102: ADA definition of disability
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 12103: ADA definition of auxiliary aids and services
- 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 12131-12134: ADA Title II, Public Services
- 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 12181-12189: ADA Title III, Public Accommodations
- 28 C.F.R. § 35.101 et seq.: ADA Title II regulations
- 28 C.F.R. § 36.101 et seq.: ADA Title IV regulations
- 28 C.F.R. § 42.501 et seq.: Section 504 DOJ regulations
- 45 C.F.R. § 84.1 et seq.: Section 504 DHHS regulations
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(10): licensing standards, RPP requirements
- 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(20): background check requirements, databases, and registries
- 45 C.F.R. § 1356.30: background check requirements
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2310: FP contact, other adult notification & contact, FP cooperation
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-1210 thru 1230: out-of-home investigations
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2340: fingerprinting
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2345: payment of FBI fingerprinting
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2350: restrictions (child abuse, certain crimes)
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2360: minor sex offenders in the home
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2380: foster parent training
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-11-70: background checks; pardons
- S.C. Code Reg. § 114-550: licensing regulations

Forms:

[DSS Form 30244: Quarterly Home Visit Guide](#)

[DSS Form 30245: Education and Health Passport](#)