



Policy Title:	Foster Home Licensing Policy				
Policy Number:	Post-Custody Policy 004	Version:	2	Effective Date:	2/17/21

Date: 02/17/2021

Approved By: YFS Operations Team

Overview

Description: The Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services- Youth and Family Services Division (DSS-YFS) Foster Home Licensing Policy seeks to provide consistency and guidance around the process by which Child Welfare Specialists (CWS) assess prospective foster, kinship, and adoptive homes to ensure stability and safety for children.

Purpose/Rationale: Mecklenburg County DSS-YFS is committed to strengthening families and communities to keep children safe and ensuring that practices and assessments utilized across all service areas are purposeful and comprehensive in approach. Engaging the community in a manner that promotes child safety, permanence, and well-being is critical to upholding the agency's mission. This policy details the guidelines and procedures for foster/kinship/adoptive home licensing to ensure that all youth at risk of removal from birth parent(s)/caregiver(s) are placed in safe and nurturing homes that reflect their best interest and meet required North Carolina state licensing standards.

Applicability: All post-custody frontline, supervisory, and managerial staff; Director & Deputy Director(s)

Definition(s):


Shared Parenting: A continuum of contact that emphasizes foster parents as being a support to birth families instead of substitute caretakers.

Active Parenting: Relates to a caretaker's ability to be present and attentive to a child's individualized needs/development and actively participating in all facets of parenting.

Failure to Comply: Failure to comply with this policy could result in disciplinary actions up to revoking of licensure for foster/kinship/adoptive families.

Policy

NC Division of Social Services Foster Home Licensing policy states the following: *"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*

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nurturing that society expects of a family.”

In accordance with state policy and the Practice Model, Mecklenburg County DSS-YFS believes that all children and youth deserve a safe family environment. First consideration for placement should be kin connections who are capable of providing a safe & nurturing home. For cases where licensure is requested, there are a number of factors that must be considered when placing children in a licensed foster home. It is important that Child Welfare Specialists know the legal basis for foster home licensing so they can help the foster families that they supervise understand the system. Child Welfare Specialists from pre- and post-custody service areas must ensure that placements for youth in YFS custody are secured, assessed, monitored, and maintained in accordance with the procedures outlined below. This policy is an update to the Foster Home Administrative Policy created on May 15, 2004.

Procedure(s) that apply:

Foster home licensing is an essential part of North Carolina’s child welfare system. A number of influencing factors must be considered when children are placed in a foster/kinship/adoptive home. The following is a listing of those factors:

I. LICENSING REQUIREMENTS:

Families must be assessed according to the needs of the children for continuous supervision and care. Factors that must be considered include the following:

- a. Developmental needs
- b. Medical needs
- c. Behavioral needs (i.e. acting out behavior)
- d. Emotional needs (i.e. emotional adjustment)
- e. Families must be assessed to ensure that each child is receiving “active parenting” in both the home and community

The following are examples of activities of which may be evaluated in assessing adequate “active parenting”:

- a. Assistance with schoolwork.
- b. Developmental enrichment.
- c. Participation on the part of the foster/kinship/adoptive parents in school meetings/activities.



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- d. Participation on the part of the foster/kinship/adoptive parents in the mental health services received by the children in their care.
- e. Community-based enrichment activities.

Additionally, licensed foster/kinship/adoptive parent(s) are assessed for the following:

- a. A history of experience in supervision of children.
- b. A history of reliance on siblings as caretakers.
- c. Capacity to manage transportation requirements.
- d. Back-up caretaker support must exist and be reliable.
- e. A positive history of parenting references must exist.

II. Foster/kinship/adoptive parent(s) must sign and comply with the Mecklenburg County Foster Parent handbook. Foster/kinship/adoptive parents must have a pre-placement assessment or agreement with their licensing agency regarding their formal support system. This system of support must include ongoing supportive services and back-up placement procedures. These support services include but are not limited to the following:

- a. After school care
- b. Daycare
- c. Respite care
- d. Transportation
- e. Tutoring
- f. Therapy
- g. Day treatment
- h. Specialized training
- i. Multiple adult caretakers
- j. Weekend visits with family
- k. Others


III. Additional Criteria:

- a. The approval process for licensing a foster home for all children is as follows:
 - 1) Must possess basic skills in both reading and written communication.
 - 2) A valid driver's license is required.
 - 3) Access to transportation at all times.
 - 4) Compliance with state child restraint laws for vehicle.



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- 5) A minimum of \$200/month remaining threshold for disposable income on standard foster home licenses. May be waived for kin.
 - 6) Employees cannot be licensed due to conflict. Refer to other agencies.
 - 7) Alcohol/Drug Abuse Assessments: If there is any indication of alcohol/drug abuse now or in the past, they must be referred for an assessment and pass. The assessment is maintained in the licensing file.
 - 8) The child's bedroom windows must have screens. Other rooms must have (at a minimum) door/window chimes if there are no screens and the windows open.
 - 9) Foster homes must agree to, and comply with, confidentiality and social media rules as indicated in the handbook.
- b. The approval process for the placement of a foster child(ren) in a licensed home is as follows:
- 1) Permanency Planning Child Welfare Specialist makes a referral and utilizes internal YFS homes or contract agencies for placement.
 - 2) Core support services should be negotiated and in place prior to placement (if possible).
 - 3) Transfer cases must meet with YFS Trainers for a refresher class prior to accepting placement.
- c. The supervision standards for a foster child(ren) is as follows:
- 1) A Minimum initial five-day visit is required by the licensing worker, following initial placement.
 - 2) Monthly face-to-face contacts with the children and both caretakers are required.
 - a. The child's Child Welfare Specialist must visit to monitor services and case plan outcomes.
 - b. In compliance with state standards, the Licensing Child Welfare Specialist must visit the home quarterly at a minimum.
- d. Caregiver quality assurance activities are required for all families. These quality assurance activities include the following:
- 1) Annual consumer satisfaction surveys.

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- 2) CPR is required at every relicensing and must have a face-to-face instructional component.

Form(s) that apply:

Kinship Care Comprehensive Assessment, Foster Care Licensure/Adoption/ICPC Universal Application, Statement of Understanding Regarding Firearms for Current and Potential Caretakers of Mecklenburg County Children, Foster Home Licensing Water Hazard Safety Assessment Form, Foster Home Environmental Conditions Report, Initial Provider Assessment Instructions, Becoming a Foster Parent in Mecklenburg County

Reference(s):

Administrative Policy for Foster Care Licensing (May 15, 2004), Initial Provider Assessment Instructions, Licensing Regulations and Procedures: Section .0700, State Foster Home Licensing Manual

Contact(s):

Pre-Custody & Post-Custody Senior Social Services Managers
Policy & Practice Model Supervisor

Policy History:

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