

POLICY VI-A: OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT CRITERIA

05/11

Placement shall be chosen:

- A. To ensure the health and safety of a child;
- B. To ensure that caretakers have the skills and training sufficient to deal with the child's special needs and any disabling condition; and
- C. To keep the child in close proximity to the family, if possible, to maintain enrollment in the school the child attended before placement.

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

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Background Check, and FBI Criminal Record Check.

PROCEDURE VI-A1: Out-of-Home Placement Criteria

05/11

The Family Service Worker will:

- A. Consider placement with appropriate relatives in a licensed or approved foster home.
- B. Conduct a review of the home that will include:
- C. Place a child in a provisional foster home if a relative is identified and it is in the best interest of the child. The FSW must inform the Resource Worker of a relative who is interested in becoming a Provisional Foster Home for a child in foster care. The Resource Worker will need to coordinate with the FSW to obtain demographic information on family members and enter the information into the CHRIS Provider screens.
 - 1) A child may be placed in the home of a relative on a provisional basis for up to six months pending the relative's home being opened as a regular foster home. If the relative opts to have his or her home opened as a provisional foster home, the relative shall not be paid a board payment until the relative meets all of the requirements and is opened as a regular foster home. The child(ren), if age appropriate, should also be interviewed about the placement with the relative to determine how the child feels about the placement.
 - 2) The child is in the custody of the Department, therefore, the child shall remain in an approved foster home or licensed shelter or facility, until the relative's home is opened as a provisional home.
 - a. The FSW will:
 - i. Evaluate how the other children and adults in the home will affect the successful development of a child in foster care, and how the child in foster care will impact the other members of the home; and
 - ii. Make individual placement decisions on a case by case basis in the best interest of the child.

POLICY VI-A: OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT CRITERIA

057/1109

Placement shall be chosen:

- A. To ensure the health and safety of a child;
- B. To ensure that caretakers have the skills and training sufficient to deal with the child's special needs and any disabling condition; and
- C. To keep the child in close proximity to the family, if possible, to maintain enrollment in the school the child attended before placement.

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

~~_____The prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite-sex and same-sex individuals.~~

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

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Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Background Check, and FBI Criminal Record Check.

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

PROCEDURE VI-A1: Out-of-Home Placement Criteria

07/0905/11

The Family Service Worker will:

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- C. Place a child in a provisional foster home if a relative is identified and it is in the best interest of the child. The FSW must inform the Resource Worker of a relative who is interested in becoming a Provisional Foster Home for a child in foster care. The Resource Worker will need to coordinate with the FSW to obtain demographic information on family members and enter the information into the CHRIS Provider screens.
 - 1) A child may be placed in the home of a relative on a provisional basis for up to six months pending the relative's home being opened as a regular foster home. If the relative opts to have his or her home opened as a provisional foster home, the relative shall not be paid a board payment until the relative meets all of the requirements and is opened as a regular foster home. The child(ren), if age

appropriate, should also be interviewed about the placement with the relative to determine how the child feels about the placement.

2) The child is in the custody of the Department, therefore, the child shall remain in an approved foster home or licensed shelter or facility, until the relative's home is opened as a provisional home.

a. The FSW will:

- ~~i. Ensure that the applicant seeking to adopt or serve as a foster parent is not cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of marriage, which is valid under the laws of this state;~~
- ~~ii. Ensure that there are no other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state.
(i) This applies equally to cohabiting opposite sex and same sex individuals.~~
- ~~iii.i. Evaluate how the other children and adults in the home will affect the successful development of a child in foster care, and how the child in foster care will impact the other members of the home; and~~
- ~~iv.ii. Make individual placement decisions on a case by case basis in the best interest of the child.~~

MARKED

POLICY VII-C: FOSTER HOME ASSESSMENT PROCESS

05/2011

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

BASIC CRITERIA

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

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

Relationship Stability -

- A. In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each person shall actively participate in the approval process. The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:
 - o Death or serious illness among family members
 - o Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
 - o Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
 - o Loss of or change in employment
- B. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective foster parent.

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

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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- B. is in a close personal relationship with a household head; or,
- C. is related to a household head or a to person in a close personal relationship with a household head.

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

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Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

Marital Status

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

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

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

MARKKUP

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

05/2011

Alternate care for children in out-of-home placement may be used to provide assistance to foster parents when circumstances requiring supervision by an appropriate adult other than the foster parents exist, e.g., if both foster parents work, during foster parent training, transporting a child in foster care for medical purposes, need for short-term, temporary care to provide relief to the foster parent from the on-going responsibility of care, etc.

There are five types of alternate care:

- A. **Normal Age-Appropriate Activities** – Children in foster homes should be encouraged to participate in normal age-appropriate activities such as overnight visits with friends, extra-curricular activities, church activities, and short-term summer camps. Foster parents shall exercise careful consideration when determining whether a child may participate in any normal age-appropriate activity. Foster parents shall notify the FSW if the child will spend more than 24 continuous hours outside the foster home when participating in said activities.
- B. **Child Care** – Child care may be routinely provided as a part of an out-of-home placement case. Child care providers must be on the voucher system and licensed by The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education or on the Voluntary Child Care Registry. Every attempt should be made to place children in care in a quality child care setting.

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

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

Members of a Foster Family Support System may transport children and care for children in the foster home or in the home of the FFSS member. However, an FFSS member shall not provide care for more than 72 continuous hours at one time regardless of the location in which care is provided and/or regardless of which FFSS member is providing care. No extensions may be granted for FFSS care of a child. The FSW shall be notified when an FFSS member will provide care for more than 24 continuous hours.

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

All prospective FFSS members must be cleared through the Child Maltreatment Central Registry and a State Police Criminal Record Check. The Division will request any other state where the prospective FFSS member has resided in the preceding six years to check its child abuse and neglect registry. The Division will provide documentation in the case record that the Child Maltreatment Central Registry and State Criminal Record Checks were conducted on the prospective FFSS member.

Documentation of at least one visual inspection of the home for evaluation purposes is required of all prospective FFSS members. The Division will check the driving record (violation points) for each potential FFSS member. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points an FFSS member foster parent may be allowed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Longer periods of Formal Respite Care require approval from the Prevention & Support Manager. If an approved extension exceeds 14 consecutive days, the regular foster parents' board payment will be affected. If the child has stayed in any combination of FFSS or informal respite homes before a formal respite stay, the total amount of days within those alternate care types (i.e., outside the regular foster home placement) cannot exceed 14 consecutive days as board payment may be affected.

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

051/2011

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There are five types of alternate care:

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

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

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

Members of a Foster Family Support System may transport children and care for children in the foster home or in the home of the FFSS member. However, an FFSS member shall not provide care for more than 72 continuous hours at one time regardless of the location in which care is provided and/or regardless of which FFSS member is providing care. No extensions may be granted for FFSS care of a child. The FSW shall be notified when an FFSS member will provide care for more than 24 continuous hours.

The Foster Family Support System shall not be used in place of respite care or as an out-of-home placement. The number of children placed in an FFSS member household must meet all Minimum Licensing and DCFS Policy requirements. In addition, heads of an FFSS household may not cohabitate with a sexual partner outside of marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state.

~~Moreover, there may not be any other adults in an FFSS household cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state. This prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite-sex and same-sex individuals.~~

All prospective FFSS members must be cleared through the Child Maltreatment Central Registry and a State Police Criminal Record Check. The Division will request any other state where the prospective FFSS member has resided in the preceding six years to check its child abuse and neglect registry. The Division will provide documentation in the case record that the Child Maltreatment Central Registry and State Criminal Record Checks were conducted on the prospective FFSS member.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Longer periods of Formal Respite Care require approval from the Prevention & Support Manager. If an approved extension exceeds 14 consecutive days, the regular foster parents' board payment will be affected. If the child has stayed in any combination of FFSS or informal respite homes before a formal respite stay, the total amount of days within those alternate care types (i.e., outside the regular foster home placement) cannot exceed 14 consecutive days as board payment may be affected.

MARKYUP

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

05/2011

Relationship Stability

- A. In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each person shall actively participate in the approval process. The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:
- Death or serious illness among family members
 - Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
 - Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
 - Loss of or change in employment
- B. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective adoptive parent.

A pre-adoptive home may not house or admit any roomer or boarder. A roomer or boarder is:

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

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Marital Status

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

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

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

POLICY VIII-H: DEVELOPMENT OF ADOPTIVE HOMES

05/2011

Relationship Stability

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- Death or serious illness among family members
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04/05/2011

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B. is in a close personal relationship with a household head; or,
C. is related to a household head or a to person in a close personal relationship with a household head.

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

Marital Status

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

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

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

Joint Application: In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each shall actively participate in the approval process. This joint family commitment shall be reevaluated annually.

Relationship Stability: In an effort to provide a high-level of support for children in foster care, two parent homes are encouraged. The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:

- Death or serious illness among family members
- Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
- Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
- Loss of or change in employment

Marriages and divorces shall be verified. Prospective foster parents must provide a copy of their marriage license to verify marriage and a copy of their most recent divorce decree to verify divorce.

Single parent households are welcome particularly for those children whose need for a two-parent household is not a crucial aspect of the care required. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective foster parent.

All foster parents should have a strong support system in order to assist them in their role as foster parents and, in turn, better serve children in foster care. Applicants with professional training, such as nurses, may be desirable for children with special needs. Other adults (grandparents, aunts, etc.) and children who are a part of the household shall be assessed regarding how they may be affected by the presence of a child in foster care and also the effect they themselves may have on the child in care.

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

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

In situations where existing foster parents plan to divorce, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family to determine if the family still meets all other licensing standards to ensure the health and safety of the children placed in the home.

In situations where an existing single foster parent plans to marry, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family. DCFS staff must ensure that the future spouse is interviewed to discuss his/her compliance with the "Personal Characteristics" as outlined in this publication. The intended spouse must complete and pass all background checks. All unmarried foster parents must be advised at their approval orientation to notify the division as soon as they are aware of any plans to marry so that the application process can be initiated on the intended spouse.

Joint Application: In a two-parent home, ~~the husband and wife~~ each person shall be joint applicants and ~~e-~~ Each shall actively participate in the ~~foster home assessment~~ approval process. This joint family commitment shall be reevaluated annually.

Relationship Stability: In an effort to provide a high-level of support for children in foster care, two parent homes are encouraged. ~~In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each person shall actively participate in the approval process.~~ The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:

- Death or serious illness among family members
- Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
- Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
- Loss of or change in employment

Marriages and divorces shall be verified. Prospective foster parents must provide a copy of their marriage license to verify marriage and a copy of their most recent divorce decree to verify divorce.

Single parent households are welcome particularly for those children whose need for a two-parent household is not a crucial aspect of the care required. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective foster parent.

All foster parents should have a strong support system in order to assist them in their role as foster parents and, in turn, better serve children in foster care. Applicants with professional training, such as nurses, may be desirable for children with special needs. Other adults (grandparents, aunts, etc.) and children who are a part of the household shall be assessed regarding how they may be affected by the presence of a child in foster care and also the effect they themselves may have on the child in care.

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

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

~~The family may not consist of two persons who are cohabiting as sexual partners outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and the laws of this state. This prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite and same sex individuals. Additionally, there may not be any other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state.~~

~~**Marriage Verification and Relationship Stability:** Marriages and divorces shall be verified. The pattern of marital stability of the relationship shall be considered. Prospective foster parents must provide a copy of their marriage license to verify marriage. Foster parents must have a stable marriage relationship. Not only will the unstable marriage relationship have a negative effect on children in foster care placed in the home, but the special problems of some children in foster care could contribute to the break-up of an already unstable marriage relationship. A person who is divorced divorced applicant must be divorced at least one year from the date on the court order and must provide verification of that divorce and must be divorced for at least one year from the date on the court order (i.e., only verification of the most recent divorce is required). A person who is~~

~~widowed applicant must provide show verification that they he or she have been widowed for at least one year. Couples who are separated may not apply to be foster parents (i.e. a final divorce decree has not been issued).~~

In situations where existing foster parents plan to divorce, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family to determine if the family still meets all other licensing standards to ensure the health and safety of the children placed in the home.

In situations where an existing single foster parent plans to marry, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family. DCFS staff must ensure that the future spouse is interviewed to discuss his/her compliance with the "Personal Characteristics" as outlined in this publication. The intended spouse must complete and pass all background checks. All unmarried foster parents must be advised at their approval orientation to notify the division as soon as they are aware of any plans to marry so that the application process can be initiated on the intended spouse.

MARKYUP

Relationship Stability: In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each person shall actively participate in the approval process. The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:

- Death or serious illness among family members
- Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
- Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
- Loss of or change in employment

Marriages and divorces shall be verified. Prospective foster parents must provide a copy of their marriage license to verify marriage and a copy of their most recent divorce decree to verify divorce.

Single parent households are welcome particularly for those children whose need for a two-parent household is not a crucial aspect of the care required. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective foster parent.

All foster parents should have a strong support system in order to assist them in their role as foster parents and, in turn, better serve children in foster care. Applicants with professional training, such as nurses, may be desirable for children with special needs. Other adults (grandparents, aunts, etc.) and children who are a part of the household shall be assessed regarding how they may be affected by the presence of a child in foster care and also the effect they themselves may have on the child in care.

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

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

In situations where existing foster parents plan to divorce, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family to determine if the family still meets all other licensing standards to ensure the health and safety of the children placed in the home.

In situations where an existing single foster parent plans to marry, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family. DCFS staff must ensure that the future spouse is interviewed to discuss his/her compliance with the "Personal Characteristics" as outlined in this publication. The intended spouse must complete and pass all background checks. All unmarried foster parents must be advised at their approval orientation to notify the division as soon as they are aware of any plans to marry so that the application process can be initiated on the intended spouse.

Maximum Capacity - Foster homes shall not have more than five unrelated children in care. The foster home may care for up to eight children if they are all related to each other. A foster home shall not have more than eight children in their home, including their own children. This includes placement or respite care. Including the foster parents' biological children, the foster home may have no more than two children under the age of two and no more than three children under the age of six. The sole exception to the above limits shall be in those instances in which the placement of a sibling group in a foster home with no other children in the home would exceed the limits.

Eight related children from the same sibling group may be placed together in the same foster home. In this instance, the total number of the foster parent's children who reside in the home will determine the number of children from one sibling group that may be placed together in the home.

For example:

- 0 children of the foster parent and 8 children that are related (to each other)
- 1 child of the foster parent and 7 children that are related (to each other)
- 2 children of the foster parent and 6 children that are related (to each other)
- 3 children of the foster parent and 5 children that are related (to each other) or unrelated

Foster Family Support System – The Foster Family Support System (FFSS) may be comprised of up to three other households identified by the foster family. FFSS members may provide care for children when the foster parent is unable to do so on the occasion of anticipated or unanticipated events. Foster parents shall exercise careful consideration when evaluating the character and competence of any household asked to serve as an FFSS member. Foster parents may reimburse an FFSS member if they choose to do so. The Division will not reimburse FFSS members.

Members of a Foster Family Support System may transport children and care for children in the foster home or in the home of the FFSS member. However, an FFSS member shall not provide care for more than 72 continuous hours at one time regardless of the location in which care is provided and/or regardless of which FFSS member is providing care. No extensions may be granted for FFSS care of a child. The FSW shall be notified when an FFSS member will provide care for more than 24 continuous hours.

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

CONFIDENTIAL

Relationship Stability: In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each person shall actively participate in the approval process. The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:

- Death or serious illness among family members
- Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
- Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
- Loss of or change in employment

Marriages and divorces shall be verified. Prospective foster parents must provide a copy of their marriage license to verify marriage and a copy of their most recent divorce decree to verify divorce.

Single parent households are welcome particularly for those children whose need for a two-parent household is not a crucial aspect of the care required. In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective foster parent.

All foster parents should have a strong support system in order to assist them in their role as foster parents and, in turn, better serve children in foster care. Applicants with professional training, such as nurses, may be desirable for children with special needs. Other adults (grandparents, aunts, etc.) and children who are a part of the household shall be assessed regarding how they may be affected by the presence of a child in foster care and also the effect they themselves may have on the child in care.

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

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

A household member is a resident of the home who:

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

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

In situations where existing foster parents plan to divorce, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family to determine if the family still meets all other licensing standards to ensure the health and safety of the children placed in the home.

In situations where an existing single foster parent plans to marry, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family. DCFS staff must ensure that the future spouse is interviewed to discuss his/her compliance with the "Personal Characteristics" as outlined in this publication. The intended spouse must complete and pass all background checks. All unmarried foster parents must be advised at their approval orientation to notify the division as soon as they are aware of any plans to marry so that the application process can be initiated on the intended spouse.

Marriage and Divorce — Proof of marriage and evidence of a stable marriage and stable family situation must be provided. Not only will an unstable marriage or family situation have a negative effect on children in foster care that have been placed in the home, but the special problems of some children in foster care could contribute to the break-up of an already unstable marriage or the permanent disruption of an already unstable family situation. If foster parents divorce, the Resource Worker will complete a reevaluation of the home to determine if the family still meets all other licensing standards to ensure the health and safety of the children placed in the home. A person who is divorced must provide verification of that divorce and must be divorced for at least one year from the date on the court order (i.e., only verification of the most recent divorce is required). A person who is

~~widowed must provide verification that they have been widowed for at least one year. Couples who are separated may not apply to be foster parents (i.e. a final divorce decree has not been issued).~~

~~In situations where an unmarried foster parent has plans to marry, a reevaluation shall be conducted on the family. DCFS staff must ensure that the future spouse is interviewed to discuss his/her compliance with the "Personal Characteristics" outlined in PUB-22, *Standards of Approval for Foster and Adoptive Homes*. The intended spouse must complete and pass all background checks. All unmarried foster parents must notify the Division as soon as they are aware of any plans to marry so that the application process can be initiated on the intended spouse.~~

~~Households that contain an adult, who is cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state, may not participate in foster care. This prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite sex and same sex individuals. Additionally, there may not be any other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state.~~

~~**Family Composition/Maximum Capacity** - Foster homes shall not have more than five unrelated children in care. The foster home may care for up to eight children if they are all related to each other. A foster home shall not have more than eight children in their home, including their own children. This includes placement or respite care. Including the foster parents' biological children, the foster home may have no more than two children under the age of two and no more than three children under the age of six. The sole exception to the above limits shall be in those instances in which the placement of a sibling group in a foster home with no other children in the home would exceed the limits.~~

~~Eight related children from the same sibling group may be placed together in the same foster home. In this instance, the total number of the foster parent's children who reside in the home will determine the number of children from one sibling group that may be placed together in the home.~~

~~For example:~~

- ~~0 children of the foster parent and 8 children that are related (to each other)~~
- ~~1 child of the foster parent and 7 children that are related (to each other)~~
- ~~2 children of the foster parent and 6 children that are related (to each other)~~
- ~~3 children of the foster parent and 5 children that are related (to each other) or unrelated~~

~~There can be no roomers or boarders in the home. Family members are not considered roomers or boarders. Households will be assessed based on the caretaker's ability to parent a child in foster care. Other children and adults who are part of the household will be evaluated on the basis of how they will affect the successful development of a child in foster care.~~

~~**Foster Family Support System** – The Foster Family Support System (FFSS) may be comprised of up to three other households identified by the foster family. FFSS members may provide care for children when the foster parent is unable to do so on the occasion of anticipated or unanticipated events. Foster parents shall exercise careful consideration when evaluating the character and competence of any household asked to serve as an FFSS member. Foster parents may reimburse an FFSS member if they choose to do so. The Division will not reimburse FFSS members.~~

~~Members of a Foster Family Support System may transport children and care for children in the foster home or in the home of the FFSS member. However, an FFSS member shall not provide care for more than 72 continuous hours at one time regardless of the location in which care is provided and/or regardless of which FFSS member is providing care. No extensions may be granted for FFSS care of a child. The FSW shall be notified when an FFSS member will provide care for more than 24 continuous hours.~~

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

requirements. In addition, heads of an FFSS household may not cohabit with a sexual partner outside of marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state. Moreover, there may not be any other adults in an FFSS household cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of this state. This prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite-sex and same-sex individuals.

MARKKUP

IX. STANDARDS: Prospective foster and adoptive families must be informed of the following foster/adoptive home approval standards during the initial visit: Foster homes and adoptive homes must meet the same approval standards.

1. All applicants must attend pre-service training if selected into the program.
2. Age Requirements
 - a. Foster parent applicants must be 21 to 65 years old.
 - b. Adoptive parent applicants must be at least 21 years old.
 - c. Generally, at least a 10 year age difference and no more than a 45 year age difference between the child and adoptive applicant is preferred.
3. Health Requirements
 - a. Physical examinations are required for each member of the household, including an annual TB skin test for all members of the household 12 years and older as long as the test remain negative.
 - b. A household member with a positive skin test must provide documentation from a physician every two years certifying that he or she is free from communicable tuberculosis.
 - c. The Division of Children & Family Services will neither pay for the physicals nor reimburse families for the cost of the physicals.
 - d. Copies of immunization records for children are required.
4. Family Composition
 - a. Prospective foster and adoptive families may be two-parent or single-parent households.
 - b. There can be no roomers or boarders in the home. Family members are not considered roomers or boarders.
 - c. Prospective foster and adoptive applicants must provide a copy of a current marriage license and/or current divorce decree.
 - d. There will be no more than 5 unrelated foster children in the home. The foster home may care for more children if they are related to each other. The foster parents shall not have more than 8 children in their home, including their own children. Foster homes shall have no more than 2 children under the age of 2 years, including the foster parents' own children. Foster homes shall have no more than 3 children under the age of 6 years, including the foster parents' own children.
5. Religion – Foster parents shall respect the religious preferences of children in their care.
6. Employment
 - a. Foster/adoptive applicants may be employed outside the home. In 2-parent families, it is recommended that at least one parent remain home with the child after the initial placement to provide security and an initial adjustment period for the child.
 - b. Arrangements for a caretaker must be made ahead of time.

- c. Child care providers for children in foster care must be on the voucher system and licensed by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education or on the Voluntary Child Care Registry.

7. Background Checks

- a. Arkansas State Police Criminal Record checks must be completed on all members of the household age 18 and older.
 - b. FBI fingerprint-based criminal background checks must be completed on all members of the household age 18 and older.
 - c. Child Maltreatment Central Registry checks must be completed on all household members age 10 and older.
 - d. Foster parents shall certify in writing via CFS-341 that all household members age 10-17 do not have criminal records.
 - e. DCFS will check the driving record (violation points) for each potential foster/adoptive parent and other applicable members of the household. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points a foster parent may be allowed.
8. Knowledge – Prospective family should have some knowledge of child growth and development. The knowledge should be applied to the following: daily activities, clothing and personal belongings, discipline and control, health care, education, religious and ethnic heritage.

CLEAR

IX. STANDARDS: Prospective foster and adoptive families must be informed of the following foster/adoptive home approval standards during the initial visit: Foster homes and adoptive homes must meet the same approval standards.

1. All applicants must attend pre-service training if selected into the program.
2. Age Requirements
 - a. Foster parent applicants must be 21 to 65 years old.
 - b. Adoptive parent applicants must be at least 21 years old.
 - c. Generally, at least a 10 year age difference and no more than a 45 year age difference between the child and adoptive applicant is preferred.
3. Health Requirements
 - a. Physical examinations are required for each member of the household, including an annual TB skin test for all members of the household 12 years and older as long as the test remain negative.
 - b. A household member with a positive skin test must provide documentation from a physician every two years certifying that he or she is free from communicable tuberculosis.
 - c. The Division of Children & Family Services will neither pay for the physicals nor reimburse families for the cost of the physicals.
 - d. Copies of immunization records for children are required.
4. Family Composition
 - a. Prospective foster and adoptive families may be two-parent or single-parent households.
 - ~~b. A minor may not be adopted or placed in a foster home if the individual seeking to adopt or serve as the foster parent is cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of Arkansas. The prohibition applies equally to cohabiting opposite sex and same sex individuals. Additionally, there may not be any other adults in the home cohabiting with a sexual partner outside of a marriage which is valid under the constitution and laws of Arkansas.~~
 - ~~b.~~ There can be no roomers or boarders in the home. Family members are not considered roomers or boarders.
 - ~~c.~~ Prospective foster and adoptive applicants must provide a copy of a current marriage license and/or current divorce decree.
 - ~~d.~~ There will be no more than 5 unrelated foster children in the home. The foster home may care for more children if they are related to each other. The foster parents shall not have more than 8 children in their home, including their own children. Foster homes shall have no more than 2 children under the age of 2 years, including the foster parents' own children. Foster homes shall have no more than 3 children under the age of 6 years, including the foster parents' own children.
5. Religion – Foster parents shall respect the religious preferences of children in their care.

6. Employment

- a. Foster/adoptive applicants may be employed outside the home. In 2-parent families, it is recommended that at least one parent remain home with the child after the initial placement to provide security and an initial adjustment period for the child.
- b. Arrangements for a caretaker must be made ahead of time.
- c. Child care providers for children in foster care must be on the voucher system and licensed by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education or on the Voluntary Child Care Registry.

7. Background Checks

- a. Arkansas State Police Criminal Record checks must be completed on all members of the household age 18 and older.
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- c. Child Maltreatment Central Registry checks must be completed on all household members age 10 and older.
- d. Foster parents shall certify in writing via CFS-341 that all household members age 10-17 do not have criminal records.
- e. DCFS will check the driving record (violation points) for each potential foster/adoptive parent and other applicable members of the household. The Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program sets the maximum number of traffic violation points a foster parent may be allowed.

8. Knowledge – Prospective family should have some knowledge of child growth and development. The knowledge should be applied to the following: daily activities, clothing and personal belongings, discipline and control, health care, education, religious and ethnic heritage.