



FTAdministrative Policies and Procedures: 16.4

Subject:	Foster Home Selection and Approval
Authority:	TCA 37-4-201-207; Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, TCA 37-5-105(3), 37-5-106, 39-17-1315; Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, HR 4472; Adoption and Safe Families, P.L. 105-89; Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006, P.L. 109-239 and the Social Security Act; Fostering Connections To Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, P.L. 110-351; Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, P.L. 115-123 (Family First Prevention Services Act, Section 50731, National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards)
Standards:	DCS Practice Standards: 2-501, 2-502, 2-503, 2-602, 3-301, 3-102, 3-200, 3-201, 3-203, 3-204, 6-102, 6-200, 6-301, 6-505 B, 6-509 C, 6-513 C, 7-200 A, 7-203 A.
Application:	DCS Foster Care and Supervisory Staff and Contract Agency Staff
Policy Statement:	
<p>DCS recruits foster parents who are capable to provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and are fully prepared to serve in this capacity. This policy is applicable to relatives and kin and non-relatives who are potential placement resources for children under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Reference the ICPC Practice and Procedure Manual for details in practice for an inter-jurisdictional placement.</p> <p>DCS engages families whose initial interest involved the placement of a youth in the custody/guardianship/jurisdiction of another public agency pursuant to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).</p>	
Purpose:	
To provide guidelines for identifying and approving qualified foster homes for placement of youth in DCS custody or youth placed into Tennessee pursuant to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.	
Procedures:	
A. Minimum requirements and expectations for becoming a foster parent	<p>Serving as a foster parent or foster family for children in Tennessee is a privilege, not a right. Approved foster parent(s) will not petition to adopt, obtain guardianship, or file for custody of a child/youth in care of DCS unless the child's Child and Family Team (CFT) concurs with the plan and gives written approval. Non-compliance with this section may be grounds for immediate closure of a foster home.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An applicant who wishes to become a foster parent must meet the following criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Twenty-one (21) years of age. An applicant to be a foster parent for a

	<p>sibling or other blood relative must be at least eighteen (18) years old;</p> <p>Note: Some contract agencies have a minimum age requirement of twenty-five (25) for therapeutic foster homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">b) A legal resident of Tennessee a minimum of six (6) consecutive months prior to application;c) A United States citizen or have been approved by the United States Citizen and Immigration Service as a Legal Permanent Resident;d) All adult household members pass a criminal background check;e) Applicants must be able to effectively communicate with the Department, the child/children, health care providers and other service providers. At least one applicant in the home must have functional literacy, such as having the ability to read medication labels;f) Provide documentation of sufficient income or resources to meet household needs prior to the addition of a foster placement;g) All pets must be vaccinated. No exceptions;h) All household members that will be caregivers must have up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine and influenza vaccine. If these immunizations are contrary to the individual's health, as documented by a licensed health care professional, or there are religious beliefs that prohibit the applicant from participating in vaccines, an exception may be made. However, those caregivers receiving an exception will not be able to foster children under the age of five (5) years old or children with special medical care needs;i) Applicants and their guests will not smoke, vape, or use other forms of e-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco inside the home or during transportation of a child in foster care. Precautions are put in place to protect children from secondhand smoke.j) A house, mobile home, housing unit or apartment in which the dwelling and grounds is in reasonable state of repair within community standards. Non-dwellings in questionable repair can be considered for a waiver.k) If residing in government housing, confirmation from the Housing Authority (in writing) must be provided to complete the home approval process as this may affect eligibility. <p>2. Applicants are eligible regardless of gender, race, color, or national origin.</p> <p>3. An applicant that wishes to become a foster parent is expected to participate in the following activities to assist the family in reaching permanency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Mentor birth parents;b) Transport children to routine appointments; andc) Participate in Child and family Team Meetings (CFTM), court hearings and other meetings. <p>4. Approval is a mutual selection process and is based on the applicant's ability to meet specific approval requirements, meet regional placement needs and to promote DCS Standards of Professional Practice. Refer to form CS-1217,</p>
--	---

	<p><i>Acknowledgement of Understanding Regarding Placement Acceptance.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. All adult household members that provide a parental/caretaking role (child care, transportation, discipline, or other support to children) must meet the same training and criminal history requirements as the foster parent applicant. This does not include birth parents that may reside in an applicant's home. 6. For foster homes wanting to be re-activated or re-classified follow the <u>Protocol for Re-Activation and Re-Classification of Foster Homes</u>. The completion of the new POPS Tool is only necessary if there are identified concerns.
<p>B. DCS Response to potential foster parents</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central Office Foster Care Unit staff and Regional Foster Parent Support (FPS) staff responding to inquiries or referrals provide interested families with an overview of foster parenting, the home study process and approval requirements. The opening of the inquiry/referral and documentation of the contact is entered into TFACTS and responded to within two (2) to five (5) business days. 2. Foster home referrals submitted to the region through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) are contacted by the assigned home study writer within seven (7) calendar days of the referral's entry into TFACTS. 3. DCS/Contract staff persons may assist families in completing their application paperwork after the TN Knowledge Empowers You (TN KEY) Information Meeting.
<p>C. Opportunities for the consideration of relative/kinship foster home approval</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When seeking to approve a relative or kin as a foster parent, certain <i>non-safety</i> approval standards (<i>Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act</i>) (<i>H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351</i>) may be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis during the approval process. These considerations may include, but not be limited to, the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Income standard; and, b) Minimum number of bedrooms per inhabitant, 2. Other considerations identified that are not listed above are carefully reviewed prior to the placement of children and documented on form CS-0682, Expedited Placement Assessment Summary and the foster home study narrative. 3. Contract Agencies may also utilize relative or kinship homes in this manner. In cases of a Contract Agency wishing to utilize a relative or kinship home after taking certain approval requirements under consideration, the provider is solely responsible for the review and waiver of otherwise mandatory requirements. 4. Contract Agencies may partner with a DCS region to fully approve an already approved expedited relative or kin foster home. The agency assumes responsibility to fully approve the home according to this policy. Once requirements are completed, the Contract Agency provides the documentation to the DCS region to be entered into TFACTS. 5. Based on the agreement between the DCS region and Contract Agency, the DCS region then follows <u>Protocol for Re-Activation or Re-Classification of Foster Homes</u> to transfer the home to the agency or share the foster home.

D. Home Approval process

1. The foster home approval process includes the completion of pre-service training, various forms, medical clearance, home safety inspection and a written home study.
2. Foster parent applicants and co-applicant are required to complete TN KEY pre-service training. All married couples are required to complete TN KEY regardless if one spouse may be identified as an "Other Adult" residing in the home.
3. The foster home study process begins with the TN KEY Information Meeting. Applicants are provided forms **CS-0688, Foster Home Application for Parenting**, **CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO or FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release**, **CS-0691, Fingerprint Card Information** and **CS-1221, Waiver Agreement and Statement for Criminal History Checks (VECHS)**. These documents are returned to DCS/Contract Agency staff prior to or at the beginning of session one of TN KEY training.
4. Once the applicant(s) enters TN KEY training, they are provided a binder of the remaining forms to be completed for the home approval process. The Region assigns a Foster Parent Support (FPS) staff person that manages the home and provides support to the parents.
5. For DCS foster homes, FPS makes a referral to the Home Study Writer contractor, at minimum, when core TN KEY courses are completed.
6. The foster home study writer conducts at least three (3) planned interviews with the potential foster parents (or two (2) if a lone applicant), including one (1) home consultation and individual interview with each person residing in the home. All other interviews are conducted in the home or some other convenient place that is conducive to professional interviews using the [Profile of Parenting Study \(POPS\) Tool](#). The interview process begins immediately following TN KEY session three.
7. Interviews with adults (*i.e.*, spouses, co-habitants, *etc.*) residing in the same home may be conducted during one visit. It is possible that the four (4) required interviews could take place in three (3) visits if each adult inhabitant is interviewed separately in one visit.

Each foster parent applicant and each member of the family provides a medical report from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner or equivalent health care professional documenting the acceptable physical and emotional health of all household members. Forms **CS-0678, Foster Parent/Other Adult Medical Report** and **CS-0427, Child's Medical Report** may be used to document the applicant's current medical status, and other adult or child/youth household members. In cases where a child/youth as a household member has had a well-baby check or physical examination for school within the last twelve (12) months, the applicants may submit the documentation from that appointment.

9. Verifications of valid handgun carry permit, driver's license, vehicle registration, current vehicle liability insurance, current marriage, the previous marriage annulment or divorce decree, births, adoptions and custody matters of children in the home including an adjudication of delinquency, if applicable, are provided by each parent or applicant. In situations where an applicant is separated from their spouse, documentation of the legal separation has to be obtained prior to

	<p>moving forward with an adoption.</p> <p>10. All household members that will be caregivers must have up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine and influenza vaccine. If these immunizations are contrary to the individual’s health, as documented by a licensed health care professional, or there are religious beliefs that prohibit the applicant from participating in vaccines, an exception may be made. However, those caregivers receiving an exception will not be able to foster children under the age of five (5) years old or children with special medical care needs.</p> <p>Note: Flu season is considered active during the months of October through March. Therefore, during the home approval process, caregivers who are open to immunization are expected to obtain the influenza vaccine during this timeframe.</p> <p>11. Potential Foster Homes with unvaccinated children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Children under the age of 5 years old are not placed in foster homes with unvaccinated children. Children age 5 years old and older that are up to date with their immunizations can be placed in foster homes with unvaccinated children. ◆ Any child with a compromised immune system is not placed in a foster home with unvaccinated children. ◆ Cases involving kinship care are decided on a case by case basis. ◆ Before placing any child in a foster home with unvaccinated children, consult with the child’s PCP to make sure the child can safely be placed with the family. ◆ Children in custody who are not vaccinated cannot be placed in a foster home with children under age five (5) years old. <p>11. Copies of valid Tennessee driver’s license and (if applicable), vehicle registration, current vehicle liability insurance, and proof of county vehicle inspection is obtained for any household member who might transport a child.</p> <p>12. References are obtained from three (3) individuals not related to the applicants, as well as one (1) relative reference from each of the applicants. The individuals providing references may not reside in the home of the applicants.</p>
<p>E. Foster Home approval or denial</p>	<p>1. A decision on approval or denial regarding the foster home study is made within ninety (90) days of the applicant’s completion of TN KEY and any additional required pre-service training for applicants to Contract Agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Any foster home that is anticipated to be approved outside of the 90-day time frame requires an approved extension explaining the circumstances and the expected date for approval. All time frame extensions are required to be documented on form CS-1018, Foster Home Extension Request and submitted to the Director of Foster Care/Designee for approval. Contract Agencies do not require Central Office approval in such instances but are required to document the reason for the delay in approval or denial or any extension on form CS-1018. <p>2. In accordance with the <i>Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act of 2006</i>, an ICPC foster home study, with a decision to approve or deny the foster home, is issued within sixty (60) calendar days of the date of</p>

	<p>the ICPC referral in TFACTS.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. If completion of the study or issuance of a decision regarding the ICPC foster home cannot meet the sixty (60) calendar daytime line, the DCS foster home study writer or Contract Agency personnel documents the reasons for the delay. They also address action steps to be taken, including a proposed date of completion, in TFACTS. Follow-up documentation is included every thirty (30) days until a decision is issued. Notice of the documentation is forwarded to the DCS ICPC Office. 4. The foster home study approval date and the foster home approval date in TFACTS are the same date. The decision regarding the foster home study is not valid until signed by the Team Leader and/or Team Coordinator. 5. In the case of Contract Agency homes, the decision regarding the foster home study is not valid until signed by a Contract Agency supervisor. When approved, DCS or Contract Agency staff: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Notify the applicants in writing using form CS-0702, Foster Home Approval clearly defining the age range, capacity (not to exceed six (6) children total), and gender of children for which the family is approved to parent. The approval letter also includes information regarding the type of physical, emotional, behavioral, and personality traits of children the family is most successful in parenting; b) Enter the new foster home into TFACTS; and c) The foster home study writer assists any potential foster family interested in adopting to register with <i>AdoptUSKids.org</i>. Interested families are given form CS-1012, ADOPTUSKIDS Registration and a signed copy of the form is placed in the foster home electronic file. 6. DCS/Contract Agency staff does not approve any applications or referrals that do not meet the standards outlined in this policy and DCS Policy <u>16.3, Desired Characteristics of Foster Parents</u>. 7. If a foster family is denied, the procedures outlined in DCS Policy <u>16.16, Denial, Closure or Suspended Admissions of Foster Homes</u> are followed.
<p>F. Mandatory Pre-Service training</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DCS schedules and offers one TN KEY group a month in each region. Contract Agencies schedule TN KEY groups as required. 2. All traditional applicants attend a TN KEY Informational Meeting to become better oriented to the training and home study approval process prior to attending TN KEY sessions. Kinship applicants are exempt from this meeting. 3. All applicants are required to complete TN KEY training. Non-kinship applicants are required to complete Traditional TN KEY (23 hours). Kinship Applicants are able to complete Traditional TN KEY (23 hours) or Condensed Kinship TN KEY (16 hours). 4. Therapeutic foster homes are required to complete thirty (30) hours of Pre-Service training that included TN KEY (23 hours) and a minimum of seven (7) hours of therapeutic foster parent training.

5. Although there can be no changes to the *TN KEY Curriculum*, staff can submit a waiver for TN KEY Modification on form **CS-0921, *Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre and In-Service Training Requirements, Non-Safety Issues, CPS Substantiations and Educational Requirements*** (refer to form instructions for required signatures) if any of the following TN KEY training formats best meet the needs of the family:
 - a) Use of TN KEY training with one individual, rather than in a larger, group format. Upon approval, staff complete and submit form **CS-1158, *Individual TN KEY Training*** to the Office of Training and Professional Development for review and approval.
 - b) Substitution of other approved training and past fostering experiences accepted as TN KEY equivalent.
 - c) Condensed TN KEY for Relatives (16 hours), relatives referred for ICPC **16.20, Expedited Custodial Placements** requests and *Regulation 7* placement requests.
6. TN KEY is co-led by a DCS or Contract Agency staff person who has a minimum of a bachelor's degree, along with a trained DCS or Contract Agency foster parent. Youth co-leaders are also included in TN KEY Training Sessions as identified and relevant to their expertise.
7. All foster parent applicants and/or any adults living in the household who have a parenting role must complete TN KEY training.

Note: Birth parents that are residing in an applicant's home are not required to take TN KEY.
8. A waiver request is not necessary for adults living in the foster home who have no parenting role. Clear documentation in the foster home record is completed to explain why the individuals are exempt from TN KEY training.
9. Older birth or adopted children who are living in the home of the foster parents that turn eighteen (18) years old after the parents are approved, do not have to complete TN KEY, unless they have a parenting role.
10. Foster homes that have been closed for less than two (2) years and were in good standing at the time of closure are not required to re-take initial TN KEY training. Trainers use DCS form **CS-1229, *Foster Parent Pre-Service Refresher Training Plan*** to refresh foster homes closed in good standing for a period in excess of two (2) years on pre-service training components:
 - a) Conduct an informal verbal assessment to determine an appropriate training plan for the foster family using the guidelines below (b-f).
 - b) Deliver Pre-Service Refresher training in the home using the outline established on the following page.
 - c) Confirm the last date that parent completed Medication Administration. If more than two (2) years, parents are required to attend a Medication Administration Refresher course via live webinar.
 - d) Enroll applicants in CPR/FA if their certification has lapsed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Complete a new Pre-Service Training Assessment form for the family and submit to the Home Study writer, f) Foster parents will not be required to attend a TN KEY group. Parents do one of the following after the refresher is completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Receive in-home training on one or more modules as determined by the completed Assessment; ◆ Attend a TN KEY module or group if the foster parent elects to attend and/or prefers this option to the in-home training requirement; ◆ Proceed with fostering upon approval of home study. <p>11. If a home has completed TN KEY training but has remained in pending status for more than one year or a home completes Pre-Service training in another state, the Office of Training and Professional Development must evaluate whether the foster parents are required to retake TN KEY or other recommended courses. If it is decided the family does not need to re-enroll in TN KEY, the rationale is documented in the foster home study.</p> <p>12. FPS Staff and Contract Agencies should consult to exchange/share training and certification information.</p> <p>13. In addition to the completion of TN KEY training, an applicant completes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) CPR/First Aid (4 hours) non-certification class (medical professionals such as doctors or nurses who are certified due to employment can present their current/CPR/First Aid certification to TN KEY trainer or home study writer instead of taking the course). Online CPR/First Aid training is not allowed; and b) Medication Administration (4 hours). Medical professionals can complete the following online course to fulfill this requirement: <u>Medication Administration for Medical Professionals</u>.
<p>G. General Areas of assessment</p>	<p>During the foster home study process, the foster home study writer or FPS assesses, at minimum, the following areas with the applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All areas outlined in DCS Policy <u>16.3, Desired Characteristics of Foster Parents</u>. 2. Understanding of core components of TN KEY; if trainers complete DCS form CS-1227, TN KEY Assessment, to document the applicant’s pre-service training experience. Foster parent applicants complete DCS form CS-1228, TN KEY Mutual Assessment Process Questionnaire, to document their understanding of the core components of TN KEY. The Home Study writer summarizes both documents in the Training Experience section of the home study narrative. 3. Parenting interests, abilities and willingness to foster certain behavioral characteristics are documented on form CS-0962, Foster Parent Applicant Questionnaire. 4. Foster home capacity (refer to DCS Policy <u>16.46, Child/Youth Referral and Placement</u>); and

5. The home's environment for safety and risk, documenting whether the prospective residence meets acceptable sanitary requirements, utilizing form **CS-0676, Home Safety Checklist**. Although this list is not designed to be comprehensive, all items must be complied with and the following areas **are** assessed and confirmed:
- a) Physical facilities meet the needs of children based on age, gender, sibling group status and any other special needs;
 - b) The residence is free of hazards(refer to **CS-0676, Home Safety Checklist**);
 - c) The residence has an adequate water supply:
 - ◆ Applicants who rely on well water provide documentation of its safety;
 - d) The residence has working toilet and bathroom with tub and/or shower;
 - e) The residence has a properly operating kitchen with a sink, refrigerator, stove and oven;
 - f) The residence has heating and cooling units in safe operating condition;
 - g) The residence has a working telephone (landline or cell phone to connect to local 911 emergency services) or access to a working telephone in close walking proximity. Homes with no telephone access must include emergency telephone procedures in the home's evacuation/safety plan;
 - h) The residence has adequate sewage disposal;
 - i) The residence has adequate sleeping space:
 - ◆ Unfinished attics, basements, hallways or other outbuildings may not be used as sleeping rooms;
 - ◆ Children have their own bed that includes a mattress, box springs (unless they are bunk beds) and bed frame. Platform beds are also acceptable (refer to the [Protocol for Safe Sleep Education and Delivery of Safe Sleep Furniture](#), if applicable);
 - ◆ Baby Hammocks, baby boxes or Rock 'n Play Sleepers are prohibited;
 - ◆ No more than two (2) children share a sleeping room. Exceptions may be granted, in writing, by the Team Leader or Contract Agency supervisory staff, if it becomes necessary for more than two (2) children to share a sleeping room;
 - ◆ Children three (3) years of age or older may not share the bedroom of the foster parent(s) except for brief periods of illness or emotional distress.
 - ◆ Children ages four (4) years old and under, of the opposite sex and are siblings are allowed to share sleeping rooms;
 - j) The residence has adequate storage space:
 - ◆ Individual space is provided for each child/youth's personal possessions.

6. Pets or domestic animals:
 - a) In or on the premises of a foster home are kept in a safe and sanitary manner in accordance with state and local laws;
 - b) All family pets receive vaccinations as required by law with verification of vaccination provided;
 - c) Though there is no limit to the number of pets allowed in a home, this is considered upon final assessment of the home study.
7. The residence is free from rodents and insect infestation.
8. Foster parents who are gun owners adhere to the following:
 - a) Foster Parents in possession of a Handgun Carry Permit, as per *TCA 39-17-1351*, provide DCS/ Contract Agency staff with a photocopy of the permit for the Foster Home Case File:
 - ◆ Each permit carrier is responsible for the renewal of the permit as required by *TCA 39-17-1351* or other applicable law;
 - ◆ The permit holder provides DCS/ Contract Agency staff with a copy of the gun permit at time of renewal;
 - ◆ Per *TCA 39-17-1351(r)(1)*, out-of-state handgun carry permits are transferred within six months (6) of establishing residency in TN;
 - ◆ Foster Parents who possess a handgun permit and choose to carry a weapon in their vehicle complies with *TCA 39-17-1313*.
 - ◆ Foster Parents who possess a handgun permit and choose to carry a weapon on their person or in their vehicle in the presence of children in their care exercise extreme caution at all times and comply with all applicable state and federal laws while possessing such handgun.
 - ◆ Foster Parents who meet the requirements of *TCA 39-17-1315* (e.g., law enforcement officer, police officer, bonded and sworn deputy sheriff, director, commissioner, county magistrate, or retired law enforcement) who choose to carry a handgun at all times provide documentation of the written directive required by *TCA 39-17-1315* to DCS/Contract Agency staff. Such individuals comply with item b of this section (below) regarding storage of weapons and ammunition.

Note: Refer to form **CS-0670, Foster Parent Oath to Abide.**

 - b) All firearms, bows and arrows, hunting knives and weapons of any variety are housed and locked in a secure gun cabinet or other secure storage facility inaccessible to children. Gun cabinets with glass enclosures or glass doors are not appropriate. Keys to the gun cabinet are secured in a separate location. Trigger locks are utilized on all firearms. Ammunition is stored and locked separately away from the gun's location.
9. Swimming pools/hot tubs/spas are secured in accordance with city and/or county safety ordinances to include, but not limited to pool barriers, secured entry gates and pool alarms.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A safety plan is addressed within the home study or in an addendum for already approved foster homes regarding pools or any other water hazards on the property. <p>10. In an effort to ensure each placement is a drug-free environment foster parents are held to expectations outlined in the <u>Protocol for Drug and Medication Expectations for Approved Foster Homes</u> and the <u>Controlled Substance and Medication Work Aid</u>.</p> <p>11. Specific non-safety issues may be waived by the region during the approval process of the foster home. Any considerations for waiver are documented on form CS-0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre and In-Service Training Requirements, Non-Safety Issues, CPS Substantiations and Educational Requirements, and clearly identified as a “non-safety issue”. The waiver is reviewed and approved by the Regional Administrator or the Contract Agency Executive Director or his/her designee. Information contained in CS-0921 is documented in the foster home study narrative.</p>
<p>H. Fire Safety</p>	<p>1. Foster homes contain the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) UL-approved, operational smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors where children sleep are located in the child/youth’s bedroom, or in the hallway adjacent to the child/youth’s bedroom. b) A functioning fire extinguisher for each floor of the residence. The usage of a Tundra Fire Extinguisher Spray Can is not acceptable. <p>2. Applicants prepare a floor plan of their home, which identifies the location of all smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers and illustrates evacuation routes in case there is a fire in the home. The evacuation plan and emergency phone numbers are posted in a prominent location inside the home. Only a copy of the evacuation plan is uploaded into the electronic case file.</p> <p>3. The foster home study writer discusses a fire drill plan with the applicants during the foster home study process. Fire drill plan discussion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How fire drills might be conducted in the family home; b) How each family member would be made aware of the plan; c) The location where all family members would meet after the home is evacuated; and d) How family members with special needs will be assisted.
<p>I. Assessment of relationships</p>	<p>1. The foster home study writer assesses the quality of an applicant’s current and past relationships. The foster home study narrative includes an assessment of the potential foster parent’s ability to build and maintain trusting and stable relationships with persons including their own children, family members, friends</p>

	<p>and others significant to the applicant. This assessment includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reviewing and discussing the Foster Parent Applicant Questionnaire (CS-0962); b) TN KEY training and CS-1038, TN KEY Participant Assessment ; c) Face to face interviews; and d) Contacting the references (CS-0963, Foster Family Reference Letter and Questionnaire); and e) Completing of the POPS tool. <p>2. Significant relationships are assessed based on duration as well as the number of relationships over time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A conversation is held with each member of the household to assess their attitude about sharing their home with children from the child welfare system. b) A summary of these conversations is included in the foster home study narrative.
<p>J. Background and criminal records clearance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A criminal background check begins immediately following Session One of TN KEY. 2. A criminal history check includes local criminal records check from local law enforcement records or county court records for all adult household members within the immediate six (6) months preceding application for each applicant. These checks are also conducted for any other adult member of the household taking into account current, maiden, and any other previous legal names. All criminal charges listed in the local criminal history check for which there is no final disposition (misdemeanor or felony) identified is clarified by obtaining additional official documentation from the local court with jurisdiction. 3. A criminal history check must occur for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All adult household members checking jurisdictions within the immediate six (6) months preceding application taking into account current, maiden, and any other previous legal names. All criminal charges listed in the local criminal history check for which there is no final disposition (misdemeanor or felony) identified is clarified by obtaining additional official documentation from the local court with jurisdiction. ◆ Each criminal history records check is to be completed in accordance with policy to ensure timely assessment of foster homes. However, to allow for human error, it is permissible to rectify errors (i.e. incorrect name spelling, DOB, SSN) on such checks. Newly conducted checks that show no results are considered compliant. Checks that show convictions or substantiations of abuse or neglect within the findings that would exclude the applicant from becoming an approved foster home or approved household member as outlined below are deemed non-compliant. 4. All findings identified as a result of the criminal history check are documented on form CS-0687, Background Check History and IV-E Eligibility Checklist, with results attached along with form CS- 0921, Waiver of Criminal

Convictions, Pre and In-Service Training Requirements, Non-Safety Issues, CPS Substantiations and Educational Requirements, when applicable. Such results are reported in the foster home study and maintained in the Foster Home electronic case file.

Note: For waivers and approvals on misdemeanor and felony charges, refer to the [Waiver Tip Sheet](#).

5. A TBI/FBI fingerprint check is completed on potential foster parents and other adults residing in the home.
6. An Internet Records Clearance is completed by the FPS Staff for potential foster parents and other adults residing in the home. This search is conducted taking into account current, maiden, and any other legal names. This documentation includes the following:
 - a) A [National Sexual Offender Registry Clearance](#)
 - b) A [Tennessee Department of Health Abuse Registry Clearance](#)

Note: Any Contract Agency using an internet service to complete the required background checks for potential foster parents and/or other adult household members is responsible for assuring that such provider accesses the internet searches listed above. Doing so precludes the need for the provider to complete each individual internet search.

Failure to verify that the chosen internet service use the exact sites listed above for each check results in that check being considered invalid. This may cause a home to be identified as noncompliant and result in monetary penalties.

- c) A **DCS Records Check** includes a check of CPS records in **TFACTS** and is completed on potential foster parents and other adults residing in the home. FPS staff refers to **Safety Notice: [Conducting an Efficient and Effective History Search](#)** to ensure accurate search results and document findings on form **CS-0741, Database Search Results**.
 - ◆ Contract Agencies submit their DCS Records Check request on form **CS-0741, Database Search Results** and send to email box: EI-DCS-Provider.Backgroundcheck@tn.gov.
 - ◆ If the adult has resided in another state within the past five (5) years, the FPS/contract agency staff person or designee requests a check from each state's public child welfare agency's child abuse and neglect registry. See the [Adam Walsh State Contacts for Child Abuse Registries](#) for out of state contact information. Refer to the [Protocol for Requesting Out of State Abuse and Neglect Registry Checks](#) for further guidance regarding Adam Walsh checks.
 - ◆ No foster home is approved if the applicant or any other adult household member has been determined to have been substantiated of child abuse or neglect unless a waiver is granted, and the Due Process Procedures Division overturns the substantiation. This waiver may only be approved by the Executive Director of the Office of Child Safety or his or her designee and documented on form **CS-0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre and In-Service Training Requirements, Non-Safety**

	<p style="text-align: center;">Issues, CPS Substantiations and Educational Requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Specific information related to CPS findings and records involving an applicant is maintained in the foster parent file and addressed in the foster home study narrative. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Internet Records Clearance, CPS checks, and local background checks are completed for all adults living on the foster parent’s property having the same mailing address. This includes those living in other dwellings (i.e., over-the-road trucks, buildings, campers, mobile trailers, etc.). If any causes for concern are noted, fingerprinting is completed on the individual(s) that prompted the concern. Failure to comply with the requested background checks result in the closure of the foster home. 8. A Driving Record Check/Moving Violation Record Check for each foster parent or other household member approved to transport a child/youth. 9. Potential DCS/ Contract Agency Foster Parents, as well as any other adult residing in the home, must report any new arrest, indictment, or criminal conviction (either misdemeanor or felony).
<p>K. Documentation and Foster Home Study requirements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The application, autobiography, TN KEY training certificate, forms, foster home study narratives and all supporting documentation (medical statements, criminal background checks/clearances, references, etc.) constitute a completed foster home study. This collection of information becomes part of the foster home electronic case file (refer to DCS Policy 16.23, Foster Home Case Files) along with the foster home study writer’s recommendation as documented in the foster homes study narrative. 2. If the foster home study writer recommends denial of the foster home and the reviewers of the home study disagree with the recommendation, all areas of concern noted in the recommendation must be addressed. Documentation of each concern and how each was resolved must be documented in an addendum and attached to the original home study with all required approval signatures. 3. All completed home study narratives include a recommendation statement that clearly defines the age range, capacity (not to exceed six (6) total children), and gender of children for which the family is approved to parent. (Refer to Guidelines for Foster Home Placements Exceeding Six Total Children in a Foster Home). The recommendation statement also includes information regarding the type of physical, emotional, behavioral, and personality traits of children the family will be most successful in parenting. In cases where the study was initially intended for a kinship care placement, a statement regarding the family’s capability to meet that <i>specific</i> child/youth’s needs are also included. 4. The foster home study documents the discipline policy has been explained and the applicants agree to the discipline policy guidelines by signing form CS-0553, Discipline Policy. 5. Foster home study approval information is entered into TFACTS. Any documentation related to the approval of the home is uploaded into TFACTS at this time. Any changes that affect the status of the home’s continued approval is recorded in a timely manner both in the foster home record in TFACTS.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The Home Study Writer and/or FPS worker discusses all aspects of CS-0670, Foster Parent Oath to Abide with foster parents, ensuring understanding of responsibilities prior to signing and dating the form. 7. A Tennessee DCS foster home studied in response to a request for the placement of a child/youth from another state pursuant to compliance with the ICPC includes two (2) levels of decision making: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The foster home study narrative approves or denies the foster home as meeting DCS requirements as a foster home eligible for children with characteristics as identified in item 3 above; and, b) The foster home study narrative approves or denies the placement of the specific child or children or youth identified on form CS-0525, Interstate Compact Placement Request (100A) into the specific DCS foster/adoptive home; 8. All applicants complete form CS-0871, Foster Home Disaster Plan.
<p>L. Home Study maintenance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once an applicant is approved as a foster family, the foster home study record is maintained in accordance with DCS Policy 16.23, Foster Home Case Files. 2. In order to remain approved, the foster family maintains compliance with DCS Policy 16.3, Desired Characteristics of Foster Parents and 16.8, Responsibilities of Approved Foster Homes and all other applicable DCS policies. 3. Upon written request from an eligible party, along with a signed release of information from the DCS foster home who remains in good standing, Tennessee DCS Regional FPS staff may release an unsigned copy of the current foster home narrative to another state for that state's consideration in a selection process for a potential placement of a child who is in the custody/guardianship of that state. Under no circumstances is the Tennessee DCS foster home narrative to be construed or used as a substitute for the request of a child-specific relative/kin or non-relative study as required under the ICPC nor the basis for any provisional or conditional decision for placement under the ICPC until and unless all requirements of ICPC Article III are met. 4. Neither the DCS foster home study process nor a DCS home study is valid for determination of placement of a child or youth in a private or independent adoptive placement arrangement between individuals or private licensed agencies unless the proposed individual or family is determined to be indigent as defined under the Federal Poverty Guidelines.
<p>M. Types of Foster homes defined</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once all the above requirements are met and the DCS or the Contract Agency has issued an approval letter, the applicant is considered an approved foster family and is eligible to be considered for placements for kinship care, foster care, or adoption. All Title IV-E documentation regarding the home is submitted to the DCS Central Office according to the Protocol for Resource Eligibility Team (RET) for review. 2. An approved foster family may also be considered to parent children who are adjudicated delinquent, provided they complete the specialized training requirements outlined in DCS Policy 16.9, Required Foster Parent In-Service

	<p><u>Training.</u></p> <p>3. An approved foster family may also be considered to serve as respite, mentoring, transportation, visitation, or other foster services deemed necessary by DCS.</p> <p>4. Anyone who wishes to provide therapeutic care or care for medically fragile children applies to a Contract Agency, unless an arrangement can be made in compliance with DCS Policy <u>16.11, Shared Foster Homes.</u></p> <p>5. Pursuant to the ICPC, a home study on Tennessee relatives/kin or other non-related persons being considered as a foster placement for a medically fragile child or special needs child who is in the custody or guardianship of another state’s public agency is conducted by a private Tennessee licensed child-placing agency through an agreed upon contract with the sending state agency. The private Tennessee licensed child-placing agency provides documentation of the home’s approval and completion of training and other therapeutic or clinical support to the foster family as appropriate to meet the child’s needs.</p>
<p>N. Case Transfer</p>	<p>During the course of application, home study or tenure of a DCS foster home, any change of circumstance which triggers a move of that home to another agency, county or region, DCS Policy, <u>31.3, Case Transfer Guidelines Between Regions, Agencies, and Facilities</u> is followed.</p>
<p>O. Resource Eligibility Teams (RET)</p>	<p>In order to ensure that federal IV-E safety requirements are met for funding purposes, the Resource Eligibility Team (RET) reviews the documentation used to support the foster home approval decision. Safety documents for Contract Agencies and DCS foster homes are entered in TFACTS and attached to the foster home’s current assessment. (Refer to the <u>Protocol for Resource Eligibility Team (RET)</u>).</p>

<p>Forms:</p>	<p><u>CS-0427, Child's Medical Record</u> (for all children in the home)</p> <p><u>CS-0431, Monthly Family Income and Expenditures</u></p> <p><u>CS-0553, Discipline Policy</u></p> <p><u>CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO or FROM the Department of Children’s Services and Notification of Release</u></p> <p><u>CS-0670, Foster Parent Oath To Abide</u></p> <p><u>CS-0676, Home Safety Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS-0678, Foster Parent/Other Adult Medical Report</u></p> <p><u>CS-0688, Foster Home Application for Parenting</u></p> <p><u>CS-0687, Background Check History and IV-E Eligibility Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS-0691, Fingerprint Card Information</u> (for all adults in the home)</p> <p><u>CS-0702, Foster Home Approval</u></p> <p><u>CS-0709, Foster Home Monthly Recording</u></p>
----------------------	---

[CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement and Well-Being Information and History](#)

[CS-0741, Database Search Results](#)

[CS-0782, Family Eco Map](#)

[CS-0871, Foster Home Disaster Plan](#)

[CS-0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, Pre and In-Service Training Requirements, Non-Safety Issues, CPS Substantiations and Educational Requirements](#)

[CS-0932, Foster Home Disclosure Acknowledgement](#)

[CS-0961 Foster Family Home Study](#)

[CS-0962 Foster Parent Applicant Questionnaire](#)

[CS-0963 Foster Family Reference Letter and Questionnaire](#)

[CS-1012 AdoptUSKids Registration](#)

[CS-1018, Foster Home Extension Request](#)

[CS-1158, Foster Parent Individual TN Key Training Plan](#)

[CS-1217, Acknowledgement of Understanding Regarding Placement Acceptance](#)

[CS-1221, Waiver Agreement and Statement for Criminal History Checks \(VECHS\)](#)

[CS-1227, TN KEY Participant Assessment](#)

[CS-1228, TN Key Mutual Assessment Process Questionnaire](#)

[CS-1229, Foster Parent Pre-Service Refresher Training](#)

Note: Contract Agencies may use equivalent forms, provided the content of the forms capture the content of the forms listed above.

Collateral documents:	<p><u>Adam Walsh State Contacts for Child Abuse Registries</u></p> <p><u>Protocol for Drug and Medication Expectations for Approved Foster Homes</u></p> <p><u>Controlled Substance and Medication Work Aid</u></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Foster Home Placements Exceeding Six Total Children in a Foster Home</u></p> <p><u>Controlled Substance and Medication Work Aid</u></p> <p><u>Protocol for Re-Activation or Re-Classification of Foster Homes</u></p> <p><u>Protocol for Requesting Out of State Abuse and Neglect Registry Checks</u></p> <p><u>Protocol for Resource Eligibility Team (RET)</u></p> <p><u>Protocol for Safe Sleep Education and Delivery of Safe Sleep Furniture</u></p> <p><u>Profile of Parenting Study (POPS) Tool</u></p> <p><u>Profile of Parenting Study (POPS) Tool Manual</u></p> <p><u>The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Practice and Procedure Manual</u></p> <p><u>Policy 16.20, Expedited Custodial Placements</u></p> <p><u>Policy 20.15 Medication Administration, Storage and Disposal</u></p> <p><u>Safety Notice: Conducting an Efficient and Effective History Search</u></p> <p><u>Waiver Tip Sheet</u></p> <p>Proof of all Reported Income</p> <p>Results from Police Records Checks</p>
------------------------------	---

Glossary:	
Term:	Definition:
Driving Record Check/Moving Violation Record:	Each region has designated specific FPS staff who are able to access the Moving Violation Records through an understanding with the Tennessee Department of Safety. This access provides DCS with driving records for each foster parent/individual that provides transportation for DCS children. The report shows speeding and DUI charges and other moving violations. In an attempt to keep DCS children safe while in foster care, these reports are completed during annual re-assessments of foster homes and completed prior to approval of a new foster home.
Family in “good standing”:	Any fully approved family that is currently taking foster home placements and complied with the all on-going training requirements. Or, a family that has decided to close their foster home and discontinue their fostering experience and the system reflects the positive closure reason of “closed in good standing”.
Fully Approved Family:	Applicant(s) that have successfully completed TN KEY training, the background check process, and has a completed, signed/approved home study.

<i>Household Member or Significant Others:</i>	A relative or anyone that has an important connection to the applicant via blood or relation. This would include anyone living in the home and involved in the day-to-day affairs or has access to children placed in the home.
<i>Parenting Role:</i>	The assumption of the primary responsibility for promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood by an adult member/members of a household. Parenting refers to the activity of raising a child and is not specific to a biological connection. The nurturing parent can be a stepparent, adoptive parent or guardian.
<i>Substantiated Report:</i>	Any closed CPS case where a preponderance of evidence exists to support that the reported allegation(s) occurred.
<i>Traditional Applicant:</i>	Individuals who meet the minimal requirements for becoming a foster parent, completes pre-service training and the home study process to become an approved foster home that can care for any youth in state custody who is not a relative.
<i>Traffic Violations:</i>	These include: speeding, running red lights, seatbelt violation and lack of car registration and/or insurance.