

POLICY ON FOSTER CAREGIVER ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

All prospective foster caregivers and adoptive parents must be legal residents of the United States and must reside in Ohio. A foster caregiver/applicant may be a legally married couple, a single person, or co-parents. At least one foster caregiver/applicant in the home must be able to read, write, and speak in English or be able to effectively communicate with any child placed in their home and with TCCSB. To formally express their interest in becoming foster caregivers or adoptive parents, all prospective foster caregivers and adoptive parents must complete an "Application for Child Placement (JFS 01691)." TCCSB shall not accept an incomplete 1691 and a home study will not be initiated until a fully completed and signed 1691 has been submitted to TCCSB by the applicant. All prospective foster caregivers and adoptive parents are required to abide by the following requirements and assessment activities as part of Trumbull County Children Services' assessment or home study process:

1. Face to face interviews with all members of the household based on his or her age and development.
2. Trumbull County Children Services requires a psychological examination of prospective foster caregivers and adoptive parents as an assessment tool to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a family. This tool is useful to better match a child to a family in order to decrease disruption and improve the success of the placement.
3. Trumbull County Children Services also requires more than three references for foster parent applicants. One of the references must be from a relative, the other references must be from non-relatives. If an applicant was previously certified as a foster caregiver or provided care and supervision of children in any capacity (i.e. Babysitting, daycare worker, etc.), references from all relevant employers and/or authorizing Agencies must also be provided. Through this requirement, the Agency receives more information about the applicant in order to thoroughly complete the assessment and decision regarding certification.
4. Trumbull County Children Services must complete a "Safety Audit (JFS 1348)" of all prospective foster caregivers and adoptive parents' homes. If the Agency identifies a problem or concern in a home which could affect the safety of the residents of the home, the Agency may require additional specialized inspections of the home including, but not limited to, the following: electrical, heating, plumbing, sewage, etc.
5. A state fire inspection certifying that the home is free from conditions hazardous to the safety of children must be completed prior to certification. This report shall not be dated more than twelve (12) months prior to the date that the agency recommends the home for certification.
6. If the Agency has identified an issue or concern about an applicant, foster parent or household member, the Agency may request an additional assessment including, but not limited to, drug/alcohol assessment, mental health assessment, anger management assessment, parenting assessment, etc. Effective 5-1-2010 all applicants must sign releases of information for community agencies that provide drug/alcohol treatment and/or complete a drug screen/test.

7. The Agency may also require interviews, references, criminal record checks, site and safety checks, etc. of alternative care providers prior to their approval.
8. The Agency shall request the conducting of a criminal records check for the foster care applicant and each adult who resides with the foster care applicant. The results shall be reviewed prior to the agency's recommendation for certification to ODJFS. For a certified foster caregiver and each adult who resides with the foster caregiver every four years within six months prior to the upcoming recertification of the caregiver. The BCII shall include information from the FBI in the criminal records check for each foster care applicant and each person eighteen years of age residing in the applicant's household subject to a criminal records check. Prior to certification, a foster care applicant subject to a criminal records check shall notify TCCSB of the revocation of any foster home license, certificate, or other similar authorization in another state occurring within the five (5) years prior to the date of the application to become a foster caregiver in Ohio. Due to Adam Walsh rule a foster care applicant cannot be certified and a license should be revoked if any adult has a record of conviction for any of the following offenses: Spousal Abuse, Rape, Sexual Assault, and Homicide.
9. To ensure Trumbull County Children Services' compliance with the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, and all applicable sections of Ohio Administrative Code, the Agency must request a Central Registry/SACWIS search of the all prospective foster caregivers and adoptive parents. The conducting of a Central Registry/SACWIS search must also be completed on each adult household member and within 10 days for all new household members.

As according to OAC 5101:2-7-02, the need to complete a criminal screening within ten days of a child turning 18 in foster care was eliminated. However, the child will need to have a criminal record check at the time of the next recertification.

Additionally, the Agency will complete a review of the National Sex Offender Registry. This check will be completed for all foster care applicants and each adult who resides in the foster care applicant's home. The results must be reviewed prior to the Agency making a recommendation for certification to ODJFS and an application may be denied based solely on the results of the search. For currently certified foster caregivers, this search must be completed prior to each recertification on each foster caregiver and each adult residing in the foster caregivers' home. The recertification may be denied based solely on the results of the search.

10. A foster care applicant shall notify TCCSB in writing if a person at least twelve (12) years of age, but less than eighteen (18) years of age, residing with the applicant has been convicted of or pled guilty to any criminal offenses, or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult would have constituted such a violation.
11. As according to OAC 5101:2-7-02, A foster caregiver or applicant shall have an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of the household and to make timely payment of shelter costs, utility bills, and other debts. To show the household has an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of the household and makes timely payment of shelter costs, utility bills, and other debts, a foster caregiver or applicant shall provide at a minimum:
 - a. A completed JFS 01681 "Applicant Financial Statement".

- b. Proof of income for the household for the most recent tax year prior to the date of application.
- c. Proof of income for the household for a two-month period. The verification of income shall not be dated more than six months prior to the agency's recommendation for initial certification.
- d. At least one utility bill for each utility necessary to maintain the household. The bill or bills shall not be dated more than six months prior to the agency's recommendation for initial certification.

For a foster care applicant:

- a. A completed JFS 01681 "Applicant Financial Statement".
- b. Proof of income for the household for the most recent tax year prior to the date of application.
- c. Proof of income for the household for a two-month period. The verification of income shall not be dated more than six months prior to the agency's recommendation for initial certification.
- d. At least one utility bill for each utility necessary to maintain the household. The bill or bills shall not be dated more than six months prior to the agency's recommendation for initial certification.

For certified foster caregiver: a completed JFS 01681 "Applicant Financial Statement" if there are any substantial changes to a caregiver's financial situation.

- 12. Trumbull County Children Services must ensure that all foster homes have a continuous supply of safe drinking water for foster children placed in the home. Well water used for drinking and cooking must be tested and approved by the health department prior to the date TCCSB recommends the home for certification. It must be tested annually thereafter.
- 13. A physical exam and a JFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household members" (rev. 6/2009) are to be completed for each applicant by a licensed physician, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse practitioner, or certified nurse-midwife within one year prior to the Agency's initial recommendation for certification. All household members are to complete a JFS 01653. Any written documentation of the physical examination shall be completed by the individual who conducted the examination. The form shall document the applicant and all members of the household are free from any physical, emotional, or mental condition which would endanger children or seriously impair the ability of the household members to care for a foster child. Additionally, the Agency may require an applicant or household member to secure and provide to the Agency a report of an additional examination by a licensed physician, psychologist, or other certified licensed professional if the applicant or any household member has suffered a serious illness or injury within the past year or if it is determined to be necessary by the Agency to ensure the safety, health, or care of any foster child who may be placed in the home of the applicant.
- 14. All household members in a home caring for infants and children with special medical needs are to have an annual influenza vaccine and they must be up to date on the pertussis vaccine, as consistent with the recommendations of the advisory committee on immunization practices

(ACIP). These requirements can be waived if the immunization(s) is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed health care professional or for reasons of conscience, including religious convictions.

All children who are household members must be up to date on immunizations consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the advisory committee on immunization practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Family Physicians. This requirement can be waived if the immunization is contrary to the child's health as documented by a licensed health care professional or for reasons of conscience, including religious convictions.

The Agency must be provided with copies of the immunization records to be placed in the file of the foster home.

15. All foster care applicants must complete and sign the "Child Characteristics Checklist for Foster Care and/or Adoption" (JFS 1673-A) indicating the acceptable characteristics and type of child the applicant is willing to foster prior to the end of the assessment process.
16. As according to ORC 5103.0326(A) (B), this agency may deny recertification if a foster parent does not accept a placement of foster child. Also, ODJFS may revoke if the foster parent has not received a placement in the past 12 months. Agency should contact JFS with the foster child placement information. ODJFS may proceed with the revocation.
17. Trumbull County Children Services may close an applicant's home study should the applicant not respond to assessor's efforts to initiate a home within a three (3) month timeframe.

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