

**Cuyahoga County
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Children and Family Services
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter: Substitute Care
Policy Number: 6.02.08
Policy Name: Sharing and Transferring of Licensed Foster Homes

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PURPOSE: To outline the procedure for the sharing of a foster home with another agency and the transfer of a foster home to/from another agency.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all CCDCFS resource managers and foster parents responsible for providing foster care services to children in care and custody of CCDCFS.

POLICY

CCDCFS can share a foster home with, transfer a foster home to or accept a foster home transfer from any agency certified by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to provide foster care services for children in custody. CCDCFS has sole discretion in making the determination to share one of its homes or to accept a home for transfer. Any home under investigation or Corrective Action Plan at the time of the transfer request, or at any time during the transfer assessment process, **will not** be accepted for transfer by CCDCFS.

PROCEDURES

A. Sharing a CCDCFS foster home with another agency requires that:

1. Prior to use, CCDCFS provides an agency wishing to share use of an agency foster home with a signed written agreement stating how the home is to be used and that all parties affected by the agreement approve of it.
2. The agreement is approved by the Senior Manager of FHRM.
3. The Resource Manager assigned to the home will provide written notification to any other agencies currently using the foster home for placement purposes.

4. Requirements for sharing a foster home certified by CCDCFS are as outlined:
 - a. CCDCFS will complete recertification in accordance with ODJFS guidelines.
 - b. The placing agency will:
 - 1) Pay the higher per diem of either agency;
 - 2) Monitor the progress of the child; and
 - 3) Notify CCDCFS prior to placement of any changes.
 - c. The foster parents will:
 - 1) Complete recertification and training requirements of CCDCFS;
 - 2) Notify CCDCFS of any changes or issues with the placement; and
 - 3) Complete all requirements of any corrective action plan.
5. CCDCFS will share a foster home at or below the level at which it is certified.
6. In the event of any of the following, CCDCFS Hotline staff will notify the placing agency and CCDCFS Resource Manager:
 - a. **A serious injury or illness involving medical treatment of the foster child**
 - b. **The death of a foster child**
 - c. **Unauthorized absence of the foster child from the home**
 - d. **Removal or attempted removal of the foster child from the home by any person or agency other than the placing agency**
 - e. **Any involvement with the foster child with law enforcement authorities**
7. The CCDCFS Resource Manager or Resource Supervisor will follow up the Hotline notification within three (3) business days by sending a letter to the placing agency documenting the events in writing.

B. Placing CCDCFS children in an out-of-county foster home that has been licensed by another PCSA requires that:

1. Prior to placement, CCDCFS must request approval to use the licensing agency's foster home by means of a written agreement stating how the home is to be used and that all parties affected by the agreement approve of it.
2. Once placement occurs, the CCDCFS Worker-of-Record is responsible for providing the licensing agency all pertinent medical, social and educational information for the child. The CCDCFS Worker-of-Record will monitor the child's progress and notify the licensing agency of any placement changes.
3. CCDCFS will directly pay the licensed foster parents the agreed upon amount on a monthly basis.

C. Accepting the transfer of a foster home from another agency includes the following actions:

1. CCDCFs **may** accept the transfer of a currently certified *foster home* from a PCSA, PCPA, or PNA certified by ODJFS.
2. CCDCFs will accept a transfer of a foster home from another agency only if the foster caregiver has been certified with the sending agency for a minimum of one year. An exception can be made only in the case of a foster caregiver who has relocated to another county not served by the caregiver's recommending agency or if the caregiver's recommending agency ceases to recommend foster homes for certification to ODJFS.
3. A foster caregiver is not permitted to initiate more than one transfer request during a certification period and only one at a time.
4. Upon receipt of a written request from a foster caregiver wishing to transfer and who meets the requirements as outlined above, CCDCFs will consider the request and make a decision whether it wishes to proceed further with an assessment to determine whether to accept the transfer.
5. Prior to accepting the transfer of a foster home, CCDCFs will contact the sending agency in writing to notify the sending agency that such a request has been received by CCDCFs and to request a complete copy of the caregiver's foster home records, **excluding personal references and criminal records check**.
6. Upon receipt of the transfer request from CCDCFs, in accordance with ODJFS rules, the sending agency is required to inform CCDCFs of any previous decision not to place any more children in the foster caregiver's home, including the reasons for the decision. If CCDCFs still wishes to explore the transfer request, the agency must notify the sending agency of its decision in writing.
7. Prior to sending the foster home's records to CCDCFs, the sending agency is required to obtain a signed release from the foster caregiver authorizing the release of information to CCDCFs. The release of information can be obtained by CCDCFs, the sending agency or the foster caregiver.
8. While the transfer request to CCDCFs is pending, in accordance with state rules, **the sending agency is required to:**
 - a. Continue to work with the foster caregiver as it does with all its other foster caregivers;
 - b. Provide the foster caregiver with notification of needed training events in accordance with the foster caregiver's written needs assessment and

- continuing training plan and allow the foster caregiver to attend any such training events; and
- c. Continue to meet with the caregiver regarding the care of any child placed in the home.
9. The sending agency is not permitted to remove any child(ren) from the foster caregiver's home solely because the caregiver has requested a transfer.
 10. Within (15) working days of receipt of the signed release of information and any applicable copying fee, the sending agency is required to send a complete copy of the foster home records, **excluding references and criminal records checks**. The records are to be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested or hand delivered by agency staff.
 11. CCDCFs will document the date of receipt of the records.
 12. The record information sent by the sending agency includes:
 - a. The most recent homestudy
 - b. Homestudy updates
 - c. The most recent report of the alleged perpetrator search of child abuse and neglect information from the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)
 - d. Training records
 - e. Fire inspection reports
 - f. Safety audits and medical reports
 - g. All complaint or rule violation investigations and any applicable corrective action plans
 - h. Foster home interviews
 13. The sending agency is to notify CCDCFs of the nature of any outstanding complaint or rule violation investigations and any corrective action plans that have not been fully completed or implemented.
 14. The sending agency **may** charge CCDCFs a reasonable fee, **not to exceed twenty-five cents per page**, for copying the records. No additional fee may be charged to any party. If a fee is charged for copying the records, the sending agency shall not send the records until the fee is paid.
 15. CCDCFs will only accept a copy of the foster caregiver's records from the sending agency. CCDCFs will not accept a copy of the records from the foster caregiver.
 16. Upon receipt of the foster caregiver's records, CCDCFs will assign a Resource Manager to review the information received and conduct an assessment of the transfer request.

17. **The assigned Resource Manager is required to do all the following:**
 - a. Review the foster caregiver's foster home records and any other information received from the sending agency to make an informed decision whether the agency wishes to proceed with the transfer request.
 - b. Contact staff from the sending agency and the foster caregiver(s) to ascertain the reasons for the transfer request, to determine if there are foster children in the home and to identify the agency that holds custody of the child(ren).
 - c. Make at least one visit to the foster home and conduct a face-to-face meeting with each foster caregiver and all household members.
 - d. Complete the review and make a recommendation within 60 days after the receipt of the records. If the transfer review cannot be completed within 60 days, the Resource Manager shall document in the foster home record the reason(s) why the review cannot be completed within 60 days.
 - e. If the record indicates that there are outstanding investigations or corrective action plans that have not been fully implemented, the Resource Manager will not recommend acceptance of the transfer by CCDCFS, unless they are satisfied that any outstanding investigations or plans are not material to the request to transfer the home and do not jeopardize the safety of any children who are or may be placed in the home.
 - f. Document all transfer review activities in the foster home's CCDCFS records.

18. **CCDCFS will not approve the transfer request until the following information has been received and approved:**
 - a. Three new personal references for the foster caregiver(s) from three unrelated persons who do not live with the foster caregiver.
 - b. New references from all adult children of the caregiver(s). If the adult children are unable or unwilling to provide a reference this shall be assessed during the transfer process and documented in the caregiver record.
 - c. A new criminal records check that has been reviewed and approved by the Resource Manager for all persons subject to a criminal records check residing in the home.
 - d. A new Safety Audit of the foster home conducted to verify that the home meets all safety requirements for foster homes.
 - e. Documentation of the Resource Manager's decision to recommend the approval of the transfer request, and the reasons for the decision utilizing the agency's *Foster Home Transfer Assessment Narrative Form*. CCDCFS shall send written notification to the sending agency and foster caregiver of CCDCFS' decision within (5) working days of the decision.

19. **If approving the transfer request**, DCFS will maintain all information sent by the original recommending/sending agency as well as any information gathered in the transfer review process and the Resource Manager's written recommendation as part of CCDCFS' foster caregiver record.

20. **If not approving the transfer request**, CCDCFS will maintain a copy of the records received from the sending agency and the Resource Manager's written recommendation to reject the transfer request. The documentation will be maintained by DCFS for **at least two years**.
21. **An agency is not required to accept a transfer of a foster home from another agency. The approval or rejection of a transfer request rests solely with CCDCFS subject to the approval of ODJFS and creates no right of appeal pursuant to Chapter 119 of the Revised Code for any party to the transfer request.**
22. If children are placed in the home at the time of the transfer request:
 - a. Prior to accepting the transfer, CCDCFS will ensure that the custodial agency of any child currently placed in the home agrees to the transfer.
 - b. If the custodial agency does not agree to the transfer while a child in its custody is placed in the home, the transfer will not take place until the child is no longer placed in the home.
 - c. A child will not be removed from a caregiver's home solely because the caregiver seeks to transfer his/her foster home certificate to another agency.
23. CCDCFS will provide an orientation to the foster caregiver of the agency's policies and procedures for foster caregivers prior to or not later than 30 calendar days after the transfer request has been processed by ODJFS. As part of the orientation, the assigned Resource Manager will provide the foster caregiver a copy of the agency's "Foster Parent Manual".
24. Within 30 calendar days after the transfer request has been processed by ODJFS, the assigned Resource Manager is to review and update the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) with the foster caregiver(s).
25. CCDCFS will make a recommendation to ODJFS to transfer the home to the agency by submitting a JFS 01334 "Notification of Transfer of a Foster Home".
26. CCDCFS will request the foster home's recommending/sending agency be responsible for conducting the recertification review and recommendation if a transfer of a foster home is pending within 90 days immediately prior to the expiration of the certificate.
27. When CCDCFS has decided to accept the transfer of a foster home, the agency will enter the necessary data into the SACWIS database.
28. Upon receipt of a signed release of information form, the agency will release a copy of a foster care homestudy to an adoption agency when the foster care caregiver is being considered as an adoptive parent.

D. Transfer of a CCDCFS foster home to another agency includes the following actions:

1. If a foster home certified by CCDCFS requests a transfer request to another agency, CCDCFS will adhere to all requirements and guidelines as outlined in Section B of this policy pertaining to and required by **sending** agencies and foster caregivers.
2. The receiving agency that decides to accept the transfer of a CCDCFS foster home may seek to determine which agency (sending or receiving) will conduct the recertification review, if a transfer of a foster home is pending within 90 days immediately prior to the expiration of the certificate.
3. CCDCFS is responsible for conducting the recertification review and recommendation if there is no agreement between CCDCFS and the receiving agency.

SEE ALSO

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5