

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
(CCDCFS)  
Policy Statement**

**Policy Chapter:** Substitute Care  
**Policy Number:** 6.02.20  
**Policy Name:** Family Foster Annual Review, Re-certification and Adoption Home Study

**Original Effective Date:** 11/05/2009  
**Revision Date(s):** 09/01/2015  
**Current Revision Date:** 09/01/2015  
**Approved By:** Thomas D. Pristow

**PURPOSE:** To outline the requirements for conducting foster care annual reviews, and bi-annual recertification and/or adoption updates as required by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in accordance with Ohio Administrative Codes (OAC) and Ohio Revised Codes (ORC). Note: the actions described in this document are performed in the Ohio Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

**SCOPE:** This policy governs all Resource Managers (Assessors) who must complete annual reviews, re-certifications of licensed family foster homes, and perform adoption updates for approved adoptive homes.

**POLICY**

- A. All Resource Managers/Adoption Assessors (RM) shall adhere to the requirements set forth by the OAC and ORC as they pertain to foster home **annual reviews, re-certifications, adoption updates and amendments**, and all applicable agency policies, procedures and guides in the OAC and ORC and those instructions housed in SACWIS.
- B. All foster and adoptive homes will receive timely notification from CCDCFS of the due dates for all required actions and activities for the above three reviews.
- C. Each foster and adoptive caregiver is expected and encouraged to participate in the planning, decision making, and discussion along with the Resource Manager/Assessor in conducting the three reviews and all of the applicable activities required of each of these reviews.
- D. The Resource Manager/Assessor shall ensure that all required documentation, case notes, activity logs, required forms and notices are in the physical foster

home and SACWIS record. The Resource Manager/Assessor shall also ensure, that all activities that are required, are completed within the established timeframes in accordance with O.A.C/ O.R.C. rules and agency policies.

## PROCEDURES

### A. **ANNUAL REVIEWS: (Applicable to family foster only cases)**

Agency policy requires Annual Reviews one calendar year after the initial certification of the home and every non-recertification year thereafter. Recertification of the foster home license is required two calendar years after the initial certification. Thus, every year during the life of a foster home certificate, the home will either participate in an annual review or the recertification. The foster home will receive the **Notice of Upcoming Annual Review** within thirty (30) calendar days of the first day of the month in which the annual is due. *This activity will show up in SACWIS as an amendment to the original foster parent home study.*

The purpose of the annual review is to evaluate the strengths and growth areas of the foster home and of the support services provided by the agency. In addition, the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) is discussed and reviewed for each caregiver. Each caregiver completes the form assessing the agency's Programs and Services. Any other area needing review, as illustrated on the Annual Review Checklist, may also be discussed.

#### 1. **CONDUCTING THE ANNUAL REVIEW**

**The annual review is an evaluation of the foster home and agency supportive services.** The review also includes: a review of sleeping arrangements; family income changes; household occupancy; changes in alternate/emergency caregivers; businesses conducted in the home; issues with medical/health problems that might affect the caregivers ability to foster; also, the home is questioned about arrests and convictions of household members and a review of the characteristics of children to be placed in the home. Finally, training hours are discussed with each caregiver.

When completing the review, the reviewer should refer to the Annual Review Checklist and the Major Foster Home Procedures Guide to determine which forms to use in this activity. The 1385 Form can be accessed via SACWIS. The remaining forms are accessible via FACTWIS and will pre-populate for you, when you select the provider.

- (a) **Evaluation of Strength and Growth Areas/Agency Support Services**  
The evaluation process requires that the Resource Manager have a discussion with each foster home caregiver to assess their strengths and weaknesses. Agency support services are discussed in terms of what is needed, what has been received, worked or not worked so that the caregivers can have the tools they need and require to parent. The Resource Manager helps to identify available services and supports and

points out to caregivers how these will be accessed. Also see the Family Foster Home Annual Review Form which is accessible via FACTWIS.

(b) **Reviewing the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA)**

The training plan for each caregiver is reviewed for changes and/or additions. Training Certificates and waivers are reviewed and copies are retained for the foster home record. Each caregiver is required to adhere strictly to the yearly agency plan and attend the selected classes that total 20 hours in each certification year. Note: In some instances, due to the manual's production timeframe, the quarterly training calendars may not be available prior to the development of a plan. Resource Managers should be flexible so that when the calendar is available, they can sit down with their caregivers and plan the classes as soon as they become available.

(c) **Caregiver Assessment of Program and Services**

Each caregiver is required to complete and sign this document. It is important that the Resource Manager explains that the response to each of the identified services needs to be evaluated, so that the agency learns where changes and improvements are needed. This form is not available in FACTWIS or SACWIS. You may complete and save the document in Microsoft "Word" then print and attach it to your documents.

(d) **Case Record Completion and Submission**

1) The annual review is completed in SACWIS by amending the initial home study. The amend link appears on the home study page, if you selected Amended, as the home study type, when you created the new home study record. You can record an amendment, when the home study status is "Approved" and you want to update some of the details reported. (See About home studies or Record a home study that is available in SACWIS). All pending issues regarding the annual review must have a resolution or a plan for a resolution. If there is a situation in the home requiring a waiver, requests must be forwarded to ODJFS and approved. (see OAC 5101:2-5-18 Waivers- for further instruction) Proposed changes eliminate Variances.

2) Notes in your SACWIS activity log need to be specific as they relate to dates, places, and the names of those interviewed, including specific and important discussions and comments. Information regarding the placements should be forwarded to the child's records. Establish all needed ticklers.

**Note:** Annual review due dates are not captured by SACWIS. Workers should develop ticklers. The non-SACWIS forms used should be completed, saved and attached.

B. **FAMILY FOSTER HOME RECERTIFICATION**

Re-certifications are required two (2) calendar years after the initial certification and every other year thereafter. As noted above, every other year, an annual review will be done. The foster home will receive the official notification (JFS 01331) indicating the current foster certificate is expiring. This notification gives caregivers the option to re-apply for certification or to have their home decertified and closed. Note: The timeframe in which the notification is required to be sent is referenced in OAC 5101:2-5-24.

The purpose of the re-certification is to have the caregivers re-apply in order to continue certification, which if approved, begins a new two-year certification period. Generally, all of the requirements for becoming a foster caregiver cited in 5101: 2-7 are reviewed during the re-certification activity.

The Notice of Expiration and Reapplication for a Foster Home Certificate or Adoption Homestudy Update/Amendment or JFS 01331 allows the Resource Manager to give specific instructions, and lists the information that the caregivers should have available to conduct the re-certification interviews. The RM will use the Recertification Check List and the Major Foster Home Procedures Guide. These documents will help guide their actions performing this activity.

The documents used for re-certification are listed below in Section 1, a. – n. Some can be found in SACWIS, and can be completed by going into FACTS or SACWIS and pulling up the caregivers ID number and clicking on the appropriate form. Each form will be pre-populated with the caregiver's identifying information. Based upon on-going changes and circumstances in the foster home, it may be advantageous to address those changes in a separate visit and address the required re-certification procedures in a separate visit. Once an appointment is made by phone or in writing, the family should receive a reminder call, the day before the visit. It is important to plan out the re-certification visit being respectful of the family's time.

1. **CONDUCTING THE FAMILY/SPECIALIZED FAMILY FOSTER HOME RE-CERTIFICATION**

The caregiver applies for re-certification by completing the JFS 01331. The RM is required to schedule visits with each household member over four (4) years of age, except foster children. The RM must be available to accommodate foster caregivers and their schedules. At least one visit is made in the home. Note: If the JFS 1331 is not returned to the agency by the date indicated in section IB. of this notice, the certificate will expire.

(a) **Safety Audit JFS 1348:** This form serves as a site and safety compliance checklist and requires supervisory signature. Entries are required for each of the 31 questions.

(b) **Foster Home Supplemental/Special Circumstances Information**

Ensure information here is accurate and in compliance with rules. Record completely when asked to address and explain certain areas. This form requires signature and supervisory approval.

(c) **Assessment for Child Placement Update JFS 01385**

The form includes seven (7) sections requiring completion. Each question must be answered completely. If the home is being considered for a waiver, use the (JFS 1376). This document requires supervisory approval and signature. A narrative regarding discussion points with each caregiver and all household members over age 4.

(d) **Applicant Financial Statement JFS 01681**

The purpose of this form is to determine the ability of the family to afford the added cost of a foster placement(s). You must be able to determine the income and expenses that make up the family's budget. Proof of all household income and expenditures (including pay stubs) is required per OAC 5101:2-7-02. You will need to view current household expenses in (B) and (E). Once you have all of this information, you can determine (at the agency), whether your foster home, with or without placements can maintain their own family's life style.

(e) **Alternate Care Arrangements Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-7-08**

You need to know changes relating to caregivers, (i.e., have they moved, are there new members in their household.) You need to inquire if there are new placements, is caregiver the same? Routinely, do backgrounds check in FACTS/SACWIS and in the Common Pleas Court, as well as, social service background checks.

(f) **Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant & All Household Members JFS 1653**

Page one (1) requires entries to questions and a signature and name of agency to release the same. In section one (1), these questions need to be asked to determine changes in health status of all caregivers and their family. Conduct a frequent query of those who take medication, determine the frequency and reasons why. The answers here may determine if a new JFS 1653 is needed on the individual.

(g) **Criminal Background and Social Services Clearings**

A criminal records check is required, for each certified foster caregiver every four (4) years within six (6) months prior to the upcoming re-certification of the caregiver. A criminal records check is also required for any household member who reaches the age of eighteen (18) while living in a certified foster home within ten (10) days of reaching their eighteenth birthday. This is in accordance with O.A.C. 5101:2-5-09.1.

Appointments for finger printing are required and can be made by calling 881-5775 from 8:30-4:00. The **“Fingerprint Request Form for Recertifications/New Household Members and Adoption Updates”** must either have been faxed or e-mailed prior to the appointment, or the family must have the completed form with them.

(h) **Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA)**

This document is a requirement which assesses the training needs of each caregiver and defines their training needs. The form should be updated as often as necessary and requires supervisory approval and signatures. As in the annual review, unless otherwise approved, caregivers must adhere to the training plan as approved and documented and complete the annual twenty (20) hour requirement as designed. Note: Because the quarterly training calendars may not be available prior to the development of a plan, Resource Managers must be flexible enough so that when the calendar is available, they can meet with their caregivers and plan the classes according to the scheduled sessions.

(i) **Annual Training Record and the Critical Notice**

At each monthly visit, the RM should review the ITNA. Families are expected to complete their training plan for each year, by the end of the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) month of each year of certification, to ensure that the agreed upon plan is adhered to. Classes taken are recorded on the record, and if the caregiver fails to take their classes, the “Critical Notice” serves as a way to notify them of their responsibility to keep current with the ITNA.

(j) **Fire Inspection Report JFS 01200**

This form is only completed, if something indicates a review is necessary when completing the safety audit. See page (2) of the safety audit. However, new electrical work, additional additions to the electrical system, household fires, and new appliances and heaters might reflect the need for another report.

(k) **Placement Logs**

This document should be updated regularly. It is a quick and accurate way to document when placements are made and when placements leave foster homes.

(l) **Individual Child Care Arrangement (ICCA)**

The RM must ensure that the foster home has a copy of this document for each placement in the home. The RM must also ensure that the foster home record also has a copy of the ICCA.

(m) **Caregiver Assessment of Programs and Services**

Each caregiver should complete and sign this document. It is important that the Resource Manager explains that the response to each of the

identified services needs to be evaluated, so that the agency is aware of where changes and improvements are needed. This document should be closely reviewed by the RM, as it serves as an impetus for much discussion and follow-up with the foster home.

(n) **Case Record Completion and Submission**

- 1) All pending issues regarding the re-certification need to be resolved or have a plan for resolution. All forms need to have complete and accurate information. If there is a situation in the home requiring either a waiver of the rule, until the home can come into compliance or a variance for the home, these need to be requested, approved and forwarded to ODJFS for approval.
- 2) It is the RM responsibility to recommend whether the home should be re-certified, closed or the license revoked per the **JFS 01317**.
- 3) Notes in SACWIS should include specific information such as dates, places, names of individuals interviewed, discussions and comments. Any information regarding the placements in the foster home needs to be forwarded to the notes in the child's records.
- 4) If the decision is to recommend recertification, the RM prepares the **Recommendation or Certification /Recertification/JFS 01317**. The completed recertification forms needing supervisory signature are e-mailed to the RM supervisor who reviews the document, approves, and provides digital signature. The entire record is then assembled and given to the supervisor for review, before any forms are forwarded where necessary.
- 5) The **JFS 01317** must be entered into the SACWIS system. The data that is entered includes the date that the home was recommended and date that the license was received back from ODJFS showing the new two (2) year certification date. One license is filed with the agency, one in the foster home record, and the other is mailed to the foster home.

C. **ADOPTION UPDATES: (Applicable to Dual and Adoption Cases Only)**

An initial adoption home study is valid indefinitely but must be updated every two (2) years per OAC 5101:2-48-12.1. The RM (Assessor) is responsible for this activity in cases of dual studies. The assigned RM is responsible for adoption only home study cases. The adoptive home will receive the official notification (**JFS 01331**) that the current adoption home study is expiring. This notification gives the adoptive home the option to re-apply for approval or to have their home's study closed. Note the timeframe in which the notification is required to be sent is in 5101:2-48-12.1 (E) and (G)

The purpose of the adoptive home study is to review any changes which may have occurred since the original approval. Changes in paragraphs (Q and R) during the home study are handled through amendments. The update can be done in conjunction with the foster home recertification for dually approved homes. If an approved adoptive home study expires, the family must submit a new **ODJFS 01691 (Application for Child Placement for Foster Care and Adoption)**, and a new **ODJFS (Assessment for Child Placement for Foster Care and Adoption)**, and a full home study must be completed.

1. **CONDUCTING THE ADOPTION UPDATE**

The RM will use the rules in the above policy to complete the update, and the forms listed below in sections a - i. If the adoptive applicant wishes to apply for re-approval they must complete the **JFS 01331** and return it to DCFS. The JFS 01331 allows the Assessor to request a list of documentation that is required for the update. The Assessor must schedule visits with each household member over 4 years of age. At least one visit is to take place in the home. Note: If the prospective adoptive parent(s) fails to return the JFS 01331 within thirty (30) days of the date in section 1B, the home study will lapse upon the expiration date, and the family record closed.

- (a) **Safety Audit JFS 1348:** This form is to be completed if there is a reason for concern relative to the home's continued safety. Responses are required for each of the 31 questions.
- (b) **Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant & All Household Members JFS 1653.** This document should be completed for the applicant and all household members by a licensed physician, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse practitioner or certified nurse-midwife.
- (c) **Reference from a Professional (minimum of one)**  
This professional must be knowledgeable of the prospective adoptive parent(s) family dynamics, if not available, a personal reference from someone knowledgeable of the adoptive parent(s) family functioning. This person cannot be a relative.
- (d) **Assessment for Child Placement JFS 01385**  
***(See Section C) in Conducting the Re-certification.*** This document captures the updated required information for both a dual and an adoption only home. Waivers and variances are not applicable to the adoption processes.
- (e) **Fire Inspection Report JFS 01200**  
This form is only completed, if there is compelling reason to indicate a review is necessary when completing the safety audit. See page (2) of the safety audit. However, new electrical work, additional additions to



the electrical system, household fires, and new appliances and heaters might reflect the need for another report.

- (f) **Applicant Financial Statement JFS 01681**  
***(See Section D) in Conducting the Recertification.*** This is completed when there is a substantial change in financial circumstances.
  
- (g) **FBI and BCI Criminal Background Check**  
The agency shall request that a criminal background check be done and that BCII include information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the criminal records check for an adoptive caregiver and each adult household member.
  - 1) A criminal background check is required the fourth year at the time of the update.
  - 2) A criminal background check is required when the home study expires, due to the six year timeframe and the adoptive parent requests, a new home study should be completed.
  - 3) A criminal background check is required for each adult living in the household within sixty days of the effective date of this rule, if the last criminal records check was completed more than four years ago.
  - 4) Once the criminal records check has been completed, the agency shall conduct continued criminal records checks pursuant to paragraph J of O.A.C. 5101:2-48-12.1.
  
- (h) **A Water Test** by an approved Ohio water testing laboratory is required if this test is deemed necessary.
  
- (i) **Reassessment of Adoptive Parent(s)**  
The visit includes a minimum of one face to face home visit with each household member. Interviews may or may not be joint visits.
  
- (j) **Case Record Completion and Submission**
  - 1) Upon completion of the update to the adoption home's study, the RM must approve or deny and provide notification of the decision to the adoption family within ten (10) days of the completed update.
  - 2) If decision is to approve the home study update, written notification must include: the date of approval; the date of the approved home study and when the approved update will expire.
  - 3) If decision is to deny adoption home study update, written notification must contain:
    - a. Detailed explanation and reasons on which denial is based.
    - b. Procedures to follow for an agency review - O.A.C. 5101:2-48-24.

## 2. **AMENDMENTS TO THE ADOPTION HOME STUDY**

Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-48-12.1 Paragraphs (P) through (R) outline the changes or circumstances in which a change must be reported. This will

be an amendment and is simply a “narrative” of the assessor’s evaluation of the family regarding the changes and shall be completed and attached to the home study within thirty (30) days of the agency becoming aware of that change or circumstance. Note: Paragraphs (Q) and (R) have provided timelines for some circumstances.

New adult house hold members living in the adoptive household shall have a JFS 1653 completed within sixty (60) days of the date they became a household member. Within ten (10) working days of the date they became a household member, they shall have a BCII and FBI background check and a search of the central registry must be done per Paragraph (R-7) O.A.C. 5101:2-48-10.

**SEE ALSO:**

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5  
Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-7  
Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-48

**Related County Policies:**

Policy 6.02.01: Foster & Adoptive Parent Recruitment  
Policy 6.02.02: Required Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers  
Policy 6.02.03: Foster Parent Pre-Placement and Ongoing Training  
Policy 6.02.06: Foster and Adoptive Home Study Completion  
Policy 6.02.07: Joint Foster Care and Adoption Approval Process  
Policy 6.03.01: Adoption Policy  
Policy 6.03.05: Falsification of Adoptive Application/Home Study  
Policy 8.01.04: Quality Assurance