

Family Alternatives Foster Parent Manual

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Welcome to Family Alternatives – a family based foster care program for children unable to live with their families. As a licensed foster parent, you will provide primary care and be an essential part of the child’s Circle of Support.

This manual is a resource for understanding policies and procedures of our agency. Family Alternatives complies with state and federal laws pertaining to the care of children in foster care. The development of policies and procedures is a dynamic process and as such changes will occur. In addition to this manual, the training, support and supervision you receive will provide information to guide you. It is essential that you fully understand the contents of this manual, and that you stay current with updates. As a licensed provider you are accountable for following Family Alternatives policies and Department of Human Services rules.

Foster parenting requires understanding, compassion, knowledge, responsibility and collaboration. All youth in care have experienced the trauma of separation from family and have established ways of thinking, feeling and behaving in response to their personal experiences. Parenting someone else’s child can be challenging; it can also be very rewarding.

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Adoption or Transfer of Legal Custody by Family Alternatives Foster Family

When foster families are adopting children in care, the termination date for payment and services will occur on the date of the adoption finalization.

Counties often request home studies and other Family Alternatives documentation, including copies of background studies, in order to facilitate the adoption process. Family Alternatives may release the information once a signed Adoption Study Release of Information Form is received from the licensed provider(s). Typically the documents requested include:

- Minnesota Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Assessment
- Minnesota Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Assessment Updates
- DHS Background Study Clearance Letter(s)
- Additional licensing information as specifically requested and released

Assessment and Licensing

Family Alternatives is licensed to assess, recommend licensure, and provide education to child foster care applicants. The foster parent assessment team is responsible for assessing and making recommendations regarding licensure to the state. The purpose of the assessment process is to evaluate a prospective foster family's background, skills, strengths and challenges. The home is inspected to ensure compliance with Department of Human Services rules and State Fire Marshal inspection criteria.

The State of Minnesota requires that each prospective foster parent in the home must be included as an applicant. The assessment must accurately reflect the adults living in the home who have or will have the responsibility of parenting. An individual in the home who has or may have the responsibility of a parent in the family must be on the application and be considered a foster parent, not a household member. Even if a parent is away for significant periods of time, they are still in a parental role when present in the home.

Inquiry Stage

- A. Individuals interested in becoming licensed foster parents must complete Family Alternatives Inquiry Form, which is submitted to Family Alternatives Licensing Coordinator. Interested families must indicate two years of full-time experience caring for or working with the needs of children in foster care.

http://www.familyalternatives.org/_documents/inquiryform.pdf

Due to potential conflict of interest Family Alternatives will not license youth formerly in care within ten years of their discharge from the agency.

- B. Following the submission of the Inquiry Form, Family Alternatives will offer a home visit to answer questions, provide information and assess the home environment for safety.

Orientation Education

All applicants will complete Family Alternatives orientation classes prior to licensing. Families will be notified of scheduled orientation sessions and informed of specific education requirements. Applications will be available during orientation.

The Licensing Coordinator/Committee will determine orientation requirements for applicants currently or previously licensed. The following classes are required prior to licensing: Rules and Policies, one hour Normalcy and Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, and two hours Mental Health regardless of education completed elsewhere.

Age Specific Education Requirements

Statement of Intended Use and/or youth in placement	Specific Education Required
Children under age 8 years-old	Certification of completion of at least one hour of approved child passenger restraint education within the previous four years*
Children from 0 to 6 years old	Certification of completion of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and Abusive Head Trauma Training*

Child Passenger Restraint: Child passenger restraint training is required every five years. Applicants who have previously completed child passenger restraint that expires within the first year of licensing with Family Alternatives must renew the training prior to licensing. Family Alternatives Licensing Coordinator will provide a resource to complete this training during the orientation process.

SUID/AHT Training: A resource for this training can be found at http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16_188848

Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adult: A resource for this training can be found at <http://registrations.dhs.state.mn.us/WebManRpt/>

Background Study Requirements

All individuals in an applicant’s home over the age of 13 (10 thru 12 when there is cause) must complete the NetStudy 2.0 background procedure prior to licensure. The Family Alternatives Licensing Coordinator will provide applicants with the necessary paperwork and walk them through the requirements, including required timelines. Household members under age 18 are not required to complete fingerprints unless there is cause or the youth has lived outside of Minnesota within the past five years. Background study clearance letters may be accompanied by data forward information, which is sent by email to the Licensing Coordinator. If such information is received, it must be discussed during the home study assessment process and documented and considered accordingly.

Home Study Assessment

The Home Study Assessment interview consists of questions including, but not limited to experiences, values, and personal history. In addition to assessing the family, the physical structure of the home will be inspected to insure the premises are reasonably clean and neat, and free from hazards to insure health and safety.

The capacity of the foster home is based upon the licensing rule, physical space available in the home, the number of children currently in the home and foster parent’s schedules, skills and availability.

When the assessment process is complete, the licensing workers and a supervisor will make a decision regarding recommendation for licensure. The recommendation will be made to the Department of Human Services within 20 days of having received all required information. Decisions may be appealed, and applicants will be advised of appeal procedures. Foster parents recommended and approved for licensure will receive a license in the mail from DHS.

Withdrawal

Once an application is signed, applicants have a right to withdraw their application for licensure only prior to submitting a background study, or following receipt of a Background Study Clearance Letter. Applicants cannot withdraw while a background study is in process or upon receiving notification of a disqualification.

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Background Studies

Individuals to be studied:

According to 245C.03 Subdivision 1 for licensed programs, the Commissioner shall conduct a background study on:

- (1) the person or persons applying for a license;
- (2) an individual age 13 and over living in the household where the licensed program will be provided who is not receiving licensed services from the program;
- (3) current or prospective employees or contractors of the applicant who will have direct contact with persons served by the facility, agency, or program;
- (4) volunteers or student volunteers who will have direct contact with persons served by the program to provide program services if the contact is not under the continuous, direct supervision by an individual listed in clause (1) or (3);
- (5) an individual age ten to 12 living in the household where the licensed services will be provided when the commissioner has reasonable cause;
- (6) an individual who, without providing direct contact services at a licensed program, may have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults receiving services from a program, when the commissioner has reasonable cause*; and
- (7) all managerial officials as defined under section 245A.02, subdivision 5a.

*Reasonable cause means information or circumstances exist which provide articulable suspicion that further pertinent information may exist concerning an individual. There is reasonable cause when, but not limited to, receiving a report from the individual, the license holder, or a third party indicating the individual has a history that would disqualify the individual or that may pose a risk to the health or safety of children in care.

NetStudy 2.0 Guidelines

Family Alternatives is required to follow the protocol and procedures outlined in NetStudy 2.0 in completing all background studies.

<https://mn.gov/dhs/general-public/background-studies/netstudy-2.0-background-study-changes/>

The Licensing Coordinator facilitates all background studies associated with both foster care applicants and licensed families (additional household members, children in the home turning 13, and/or substitute care providers). Foster parents must inform their Family Alternatives worker of changes in who has access to children in care and/or changes in who is living in the home.

An individual, or if under age 18 the individual's legal guardian, requiring a background study will receive a Background Study Privacy Form and will complete a CFC BGS Data Collection Form. The Data Collection Form will be provided to Family Alternatives Licensing Coordinator who will initiate the study. In most, but not all, cases, fingerprints

will be required for processing, and authorization forms for fingerprints will be provided directly to the individual.

The study subject and Family Alternatives will receive written notification of the background study outcome from the Department of Human Services. When background study clearance is not the outcome of the study, the Licensing Coordinator/Licensing Worker and a Supervisor will review the information, and discuss it with the individual studied or individual's guardian. A written release must be signed by the individual studied or legal guardian before any background information is discussed with or in the presence of anyone else, including the individual's spouse or partner.

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Child/Youth Passenger Requirements

Foster Parents, household members and Substitute Care Providers who provide care for children under age eight or whose Statement of Intended Use indicates they are available to care for children under age 8 must satisfactorily complete training on the proper use and installation of child restraint systems in motor vehicles. The training must be at least one hour in length and repeated every five years. The training must be provided by certified individuals and approved by the Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety. A person who has met child passenger restraint training requirements must take responsibility for securing the child whenever a driver has not been trained.

Family Alternatives workers will direct foster parents to Child Passenger Restraint classes that meet criteria.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services requires a \$200 fine for any foster parent with children in care under age 8 without documentation of child passenger restraint training. Family Alternatives must recommend the fine to DHS after allowing a reasonable amount of time for the foster parent to participate in the training. This fine applies to failure to complete initial training, not to expired training.

Foster parents and other individuals driving children in care are required to comply with all Minnesota State Laws including child passenger safety (MN Statute 2960.3060 subp 4C). Booster seats are required for children under age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

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Clothing and Possessions

Clothing

Foster parents are responsible for providing children/youth with clothing that fits, is in good condition and is weather appropriate throughout placement. Foster parents will use clothing allowance funds when available and a portion of the per diem to meet continuing clothing and equipment needs.

Clothing Inventory

All foster parents must complete a written inventory of each child's wardrobe and belongings upon placement and discharge. Clothing Inventory forms are available on the Family Alternatives website.

Foster parents will complete and submit the form to their licensing social worker. Email or text submission of the document is acceptable as long as a child's initials are noted (not the entire name). At the time of placement, the Family Alternatives licensor will request an initial clothing allowance from the county social worker.

Initial Clothing Advance

Once a Clothing Inventory Form is submitted, the Family Alternatives licensing worker will authorize a \$100.00 clothing advance from Family Alternatives to the foster parent.

Initial Clothing Allowance

The licensor will request an initial clothing allowance from the placing agency. If the initial clothing allowance from the placing agency is more than the \$100.00 clothing advance, Family Alternatives will subtract \$100 from the amount received, forwarding the balance to the foster parent. The placing agency clothing allowance will be paid upon receipt. *Completion of the Clothing Inventory Form is not required for the county clothing allowance to be issued.*

When a child or youth is moved from one Family Alternatives home to another, foster parents may receive a clothing allowance from Family Alternatives of up to \$100.00. This will be at the discretion of the Family Alternatives licensing worker based on need identified in the clothing inventory.

Ongoing Per Diem Guidelines

Family Alternatives **Guidelines** for foster parent spending for clothing, equipment and personal needs are:

Children – 0 to 11 years old:	Clothing: Minimum \$75/month
	Allowance: As determined by the team
Youth – 12 and older:	Clothing: Minimum \$125/month
	Allowance: Minimum \$40/month

Foster parents may not dispose of or give away clothing or belongings without consulting the child, the legal guardian and the Family Alternatives licensing worker.

Foster parents must keep receipts for items purchased throughout placement. When there are concerns about clothing, the Family Alternatives licensing worker will complete a Clothing Inventory to determine whether minimum clothing standards are being met. This must be reviewed with the foster parent and the child. Receipts may be requested for review as well. If the clothing is not adequate, the Family Alternatives licensing worker will discuss appropriate action with the Inquiry Team. This action will never include withholding or modifying North Star Care payments.

Family Alternatives Non-Clothing Requirements

Family Alternatives requires that foster parents provide personal care items, such as personal hygiene products, bedding, towels, and laundry supplies for children in care. It is also expected that a portion of the per diem be used for gifts to acknowledge birthdays, holidays, accomplishments and significant events.

Youth in care may open a bank account. Most banks require an adult's name on the account when the owner of the account is a minor. Foster Parents are not allowed to have their name on an account of a youth in their care. Credit Unions provide an option for youth to open an account independently.

Clothing Requirements at Discharge

Children are expected to have adequate clothing upon discharge as indicated by the Foster Child Minimum Clothing Standards and Possessions List. Receipts for purchases should be turned into Family Alternatives at discharge for inclusion in the closed file. If the clothing is not adequate, the Family Alternatives licensing worker will discuss appropriate action with the Inquiry Team; action may include a Correction Order. At no point will Family Alternatives withhold or modify a Northstar Care payment.

In the event of an unplanned discharge, foster parents are required to return all of the child's belongings to Family Alternatives within three working days.

CASA Cares (<https://casamn.org/casa-cares/apply-for-grant/>) grants may be available for children placed by Ramsey or Hennepin County (excluding probation, voluntary or tribal placements). These grants provide funding up to \$500.00/year for equipment, lessons or community activities. CASA Cares pays vendors directly.

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Confidentiality and Data Privacy

Pertaining to Youth in Care

The Minnesota Data Privacy Act mandates confidentiality of information and records, and imposes consequences for breach of confidentiality. It is expected that foster parents will consistently and uniformly maintain the privacy and confidentiality of information about youth in care. Confidentiality must be maintained before, during and following placement.

Confidential information can only be sent by foster parents via e-mail if identifying information is not included, and there is a confidentiality statement attached to the email. This does not apply to email communication with Family Alternatives since email is protected through a program to insure confidentiality. Confidential information may not be faxed to fax machines with public access.

All information about children in care is confidential. Information regarding a child currently or formerly in care cannot be disclosed without a court order or a signed *Support Team Release of Information Form*. Confidential information about children in placement can only be shared for the purpose of treatment planning and support.

Foster parents agree not to share any non-public information about youth in care or their family with anyone who has not been approved by the responsible agency to receive information or others who do not provide services or care to a child in care per the Child Foster Care Confidentiality Agreement.

Media/Social Media

Pursuant to MN Rule 2960.3010, subp. 5, basic services includes services provided at the foster home to the child that meet the child's **basic need for privacy**. [emphasis added] In the document titled Agreement Between Foster Parents and Placement Agency (DHS-0139) – Item 16 – foster parents are required to comply with the requirements of the Family Foster Care Confidentiality Agreement (Attachment A).

The only acceptable way for a licensed provider to post any information and/or pictures regarding persons served by their program is to obtain WRITTEN permission from a parent or guardian of the child/youth, even if the provider uses “assumed” names to prevent others from recognizing the individual. A child or youth must not be identified as a child in foster care or have their name or any demographic information posted on a social network.

Even with written permission, proceed with caution in posting pictures and information. The information is now public and may be accessed by anyone for any reason.

In some cases, DHS has issued licensing sanctions when it has been determined that the above referenced rules have been violated.

Pertaining to Foster Care Providers

Most information maintained on foster parents is public information. Exceptions to this include the following information: financial (such as income and location of bank accounts); insurance; Social Security Numbers; references; licensing investigation details; and background studies for anyone other than themselves. Family Alternatives, however, requests a signed *Authorization for Release/Exchange of Child Foster Care Licensing Information Form* and a valid reason to release data before any part of a foster parent file is disclosed to outside sources. When information is released, either through a court order or release of information form, confidential information about anyone other than the person who signed the release will be removed and/or redacted. All information regarding youth in foster care is private.

Foster parents can only see items in their file that pertain to them personally. If additional information is to be viewed, a signed release must be received from the person giving permission for their information to be shared. Before foster parents view their files, reference forms, information received from outside investigative bodies and the names of persons reporting in licensing complaints will be removed from the file.

Youth Referrals

Youth referrals will not be mailed or faxed to a foster parent at any time. Referral information can be e-mailed through Family Alternatives encrypted system.

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Discharges

Planned Discharges to Permanency

Family Alternatives foster parents and licensing workers work with youth, children and support team members to provide quality care and services in order to facilitate placement stability. Beginning with the matching process, the goal is to build supportive relationships to promote planned discharges.

The goal of foster care is to experience safety and stability by remaining in the initial foster home placement until placement goals are met. Foster parents work with Family Alternatives and the child's placing agency to ensure a planned discharge and compliance with Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212.

Placement Disruptions

Before an unplanned discharge not related to emergency safety, the placement support team will follow a review process detailed in Minnesota Rules, part 2960.3080, subpart 11. This does not apply to a child removed by the placing authority or a parent or guardian.

Foster parents and Family Alternatives workers must provide the placing county worker written 30-day notice when requesting a child's removal from the home. This requirement will only be waived when immediate removal is necessary to protect health and safety of the child and/or other persons living in the home. Only law enforcement and/or mental health professionals have the authority to determine whether health and safety is an immediate concern.

Foster parents who wish to revoke 30-day notice after notifying Family Alternatives and the placing agency must do so in writing. In this case a plan must be developed by the support team to assure services and care that will support viability/success in order for the placement to continue.

Immediate Removal

There are times when Family Alternatives or the child's county determine that a placement is detrimental or even harmful for the child/youth. At times immediate respite in another Family Alternatives home is the best course of action, and Family Alternatives staff may authorize respite. However, all official long-term placement determinations are made by the placing county.

Child Absent from the Home

Whenever a child in placement is unexpectedly out of the foster home foster parents must notify Family Alternatives and the placing county immediately. This includes situations where children are absent from the foster home either without foster parent permission (on-run, not returned from visitation) or in cases of emergencies (hospitalization, arrest or detention).

In these situations, the county worker will determine the status of the placement, which may include discharge. If a response is not received from the county worker within three business days, the child will be discharged using the date the child left the home. Continued payment or a bed hold must be authorized in writing by the county supervisor, defining the time frame for the authorization. Family Alternatives workers will provide updates on placement status to foster parents as available.

Foster Parent Discharge Responsibilities

1. Follow the Clothing and Possession Policy
When a child leaves the foster home, all belongings must be sent within a time frame agreed upon, and documented onto a Clothing Inventory Form. This includes, but is not limited to all clothing, toys, personal objects, monies and gifts. A book or box containing special school papers, art work, photographs, and keepsakes etc. should be given to the child providing a history of the time they spent within the foster family.

2. Submit all written documentation to Family Alternatives for storage
All written information or documentation, including clothing receipts, must be given to the Family Alternatives licensing worker to be included in the child's closed file, as this is confidential information.

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Dual License

Family Alternatives will only allow a variance for a dual Adult Foster Care/Child Foster Care license in situations where a foster family is committed to a youth who is aging out of child foster care, and intends for the youth to remain in their home. Counties are solely responsible for Adult Foster Care Licensing, and only the Minnesota Department of Human Services can issue variances for a dual adult and child foster care license (Minnesota Rule Chapter 2960). Family Alternatives will work with the foster family's county and DHS to facilitate licensing and variance approval.

Family Alternatives does not allow a family to hold dual Family Child Care/Child Foster Care Licenses under any conditions.

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Emergencies and Incidents

1. MEDICAL:

When urgent or emergency care is required, seek immediate professional medical care for the child. Inform the doctor or the hospital that you are a foster parent and do not have the authority to give medical consent. **A parent or legal guardian must give consent.** Foster Parents are given a *Child Youth Consent Form* signed by the youth's legal guardian, which should be presented to medical providers for all routine and emergency care.

2. NON-MEDICAL:

- **RUNAWAY CHILD:** Immediately report a runaway child to the Family Alternatives licensing worker. When a child is under 13, the foster parents will also immediately call the police. When a youth is over 13, and runs away during daylight hours, the foster family has the option to wait four hours to call the police, provided they have discussed it with their licensing worker. Once a report has been filed with law enforcement, the foster parent will be given a warrant or case number that should be forwarded to the Family Alternatives worker. If a child returns, the foster family will notify their Family Alternatives worker and the police immediately.
- **LAW ENFORCEMENT INVOLVEMENT:** Whenever a child or youth is arrested or detained by law enforcement notify Family Alternatives, and the county worker.
- **MISSING CHILD:** The police, Family Alternatives licensing worker and the youth's legal guardian/county worker must be notified immediately when a child in care is missing.
- **THREATENING BEHAVIOR:** Behavior that poses a danger to any person must be reported to the police and the Family Alternatives worker immediately.

In the above situations notify your Family Alternatives worker as soon as possible. If your Family Alternatives worker is not available during business hours, call the agency and notify the coverage worker or a supervisor. After business hours, if unable to reach their licensing worker, foster parents must contact another Family Alternatives worker or supervisor using the list of agency workers and supervisors that provides office, home and cell phone numbers. **All emergencies need to be followed by a written incident report [Incident Report Form](#).** Incident Report Forms must be completed by the foster parent and sent to the Family Alternatives licensing worker within 24 hours as a follow-up to a telephone report.

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Family Visitation and Communication

Foster parents and licensing workers must support the family visitation and communication plan developed by the placing agency and/or required by court order. During placement support plan meetings, support team members will discuss and establish a plan for visits and communication with young people's parents, siblings, extended family and/or significant people. Foster parents are expected to support family visitation and communication by providing rides and supporting phone calls (including long distance), face time or texting as agreed. The county or tribal worker is responsible for facilitating an initial Comfort Call between foster parents and the young person's family. Additional contacts such as health care appointments, school/athletic/church/community events, and/or other meetings between young people and family will be discussed and expectations outlined during placement support plan meetings.

Foster parents need to communicate positively with young people regarding their family members and relationships. *Rule 2960.3080 prohibits foster parents from making derogatory statements about the child or child's family.* Concerns or questions about visitation or contacts should be discussed with the Family Alternatives licensing worker and other support team members as appropriate.

Foster parents are not required to supervise visits. When foster parents agree to supervise family visits, clear expectations must be developed and there must be an understanding of documentation requirements.

There are times young people in care request or already have contact and/or relationships with parents whose parental rights have been terminated. When this is the case, and the responsible county prohibits contact, the Family Alternatives licensing worker and foster parent may advocate for safe and sanctioned contact. Children's Law Center attorneys <http://www.clcmn.org/> may be available to young people who do not have an attorney assigned. It is essential that the licensing worker request supervisor support and guidance in any situation outside the county's plan.

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Firearms

Firearm Storage

Weapons and ammunition must be stored separately in locked areas that are not accessible or visible to children. Weapons include firearms and other instruments or devices designed for and capable of producing bodily harm. Keys to storage space must also be inaccessible. All guns must have trigger locks.

Concealed-Carry Permit

A foster parent with a concealed-carry permit is not exempt from requirements and must maintain compliance with firearm storage requirements at all times.

Firearm/Weapon Usage

Any foster parent using a firearm with a child in care present must have written permission from the legal guardian. Written permission must be in the child's file.

All local and state laws must be followed before allowing a young person in care to use a weapon. This includes firearms, air guns, BB guns, bow and arrows, tomahawks and knives. A foster parent may only allow a young person to use a weapon of any kind when these conditions are met:

1. Written permission from the young person's legal guardian.
2. Young person's successful completion of a state certified gun safety program (*for gun use*).
3. A trained and responsible adult present during use.

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Foster Family Move

Change of Premise

When a foster family moves to a new residence in Minnesota, the license remains open. The license number will remain the same and a new version of the license will be issued for the new location including a new license date.

Foster families are expected to notify Family Alternatives in writing at least 60 days in advance of a planned move. Support team members must be notified, and permission sought for youth in care to move with the foster parent. There may be times the county will not allow the child to remain in placement with the family if they move. This is usually determined by the impact of the distance of the family's move.

When notified by a foster family of the location of the new residence, the licensing worker will notify the Re-licensing Coordinator who will inspect the prospective home using the *Home Safety Checklist* to assure it meets licensing standards. www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/licensing/documents/pub/dhs16_178845.pdf The Re-licensing Coordinator will determine whether a Fire Marshal Inspection is required based on criteria in 2960.3050 Subpart 1.

Foster parents are required to complete the following forms prior to moving. The forms will be provided by Family Alternatives or can be accessed via the Internet as indicated:

- Application for Child Placement (DHS-4258A)
<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4258A-ENG>
- Floor Plan/Emergency Procedure (DHS-2720)
<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-2720-ENG>
- Minnesota Adoption and Foster Care Individual Fact Sheet (DHS 4258B)
<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4258B-ENG>

Change of Agency

When a Family Alternatives provider applies to another child foster care agency, a Release of Information will be signed with the other agency and provided to Family Alternatives. Within 10 working days, the Family Alternatives worker will send information requested by the agency. Reference letters, identifying information about young people in care and information about persons other than those authorizing the release of information will not be released.

Families in the midst of negative licensing action (including the recommendation phase) are only allowed to close their license pending investigation (if there are no children in placement), but cannot apply to another child foster care agency until a licensing determination has been made by DHS.

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Foster Home Supervision and Support by Licensing Workers and Interns

Family Alternatives is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services to recruit, license, train, support and monitor foster care providers. The Family Alternatives worker is accountable for maintaining consistent personal, phone and electronic contact with foster parents and young people in care as a means of ensuring health and safety and foster parent compliance with DHS Rules and Regulations and Family Alternatives Policies and Procedures.

The Hennepin County Contract sets the following requirements for all young people in care:

- Twice monthly face-to-face contact by the Family Alternatives worker with foster parent
- Monthly face-to-face contact by the Family Alternatives worker with young people in care
- Twenty-four-hour availability of Family Alternatives program staff

For young people with a MAPCY of H through Q additional monthly contact is required.

At least one monthly contact must occur in the foster home. The Family Alternatives worker will meet privately away from the foster home, with any verbal child in care quarterly.

In addition to sharing information regarding young people in placement, foster parents must inform the Family Alternatives licensing worker of the following within 24 hours:

- additional persons with ongoing and/or unsupervised contact with young people in care
- change in persons in the household
- change of address (prior to moving)
- change of phone number or email
- major illness/injury of anyone in the household
- change in foster parent work status
- change in foster parent marital/partner status
- law enforcement contact

Last Updated	3/2021
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Foster Parent Documentation Requirements

Young Person Documentation

Foster parents are required to keep a file on every young person in placement containing all written information the foster parent generates or receives. Confidentiality must be maintained by securely storing these files where they are inaccessible to household members. Files maintained by foster parents must include grievance records including documentation of resolutions.

Clothing Inventories

Foster parents must complete and submit the Foster Child Minimum Clothing Standards and Possessions List at the time of placement and discharge. A complete clothing inventory is required at the time of placement prior to issuance of the initial clothing advance.

Discharge Documentation Requirements

Any written information or documentation, including clothing receipts, must be given to the Family Alternatives worker within two weeks of discharge.

Licensing Documentation

Foster parents must maintain records of completed trainings to be reviewed at re-licensing.

Foster parents must maintain records in compliance with the Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults policy.

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Foster Parent Educational Support

Each foster parent is required to obtain educational support annually as follows:

YEARS LICENSED	HOURS REQUIRED
0 – 1	18
1 – 5	15
5 +	12

Hours may not be carried over from one licensing year to the next.

Specific Training Requirements

- Mental Health – Two hours of training approved by Family Alternatives must be completed prior to licensing.

Licensed foster parents must complete one hour of mental health training approved by Family Alternatives annually.

- Normalcy and Prudent Parenting – Must be completed prior to licensing. This is a one-time requirement.

<http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/foster-care/programs-services/>

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – Within the first 12 months of licensure and annually thereafter, one hour of training must be completed. To complete this requirement foster parents may watch the [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(FASD\) Training Video](#) and complete the [FASD Post-Test](#) and [Certificate of Completion](#) and submit both to Family Alternatives licensing worker. Other trainings regarding FASD may be approved by the licensing worker.

Age-specific Education Requirements

Statement of Intended Use	Specific Education Required
Children under 8 years old	Children and Restraint Systems (every five years)
Children from birth to 6 years old	Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma (every five years) *
Youth ages 18 to 21	Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adult Education (annually) **

*http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16_188848

**<http://registrations.dhs.state.mn.us/webManRpt>

Foster parents and the Family Alternatives Licensing Worker will develop an Education Plan and document it on the Homestudy Assessment Update (DHS 4258E).

Education outside of Family Alternatives must be approved in advance by the licensing worker with written documentation of completion provided to Family Alternatives. Family Alternatives provides in-agency education and an education allowance for education outside of Family Alternatives.

A maximum of 6-hours education can be received for books, instructional DVDs and/or CDs (the limit does not apply to online learning such as Foster Parent College or webinars) In the event this form of education is approved, foster parents will submit a brief summary of the content, or a completion certificate. Participation in school conferences and/or IEP meetings may be counted as foster parent education at the discretion of the licensing worker. This requires documentation of attendance. Education credit may be earned for learning to care for hair and skin in cross-racial placements.

Family Alternatives maintains records of foster parents attending Family Alternatives sponsored trainings. Foster parents will provide records of outside education to their licensing worker for inclusion in the education record.

Foster parents will receive education hours for participation in the following*:

- 3 hours for attendance at Family Alternatives Annual Dinner
- 2 hours for attendance at Family Alternatives Roller Skating Party
- 2 hours for attendance at Family Alternatives Cookout

**A maximum of 4 education hours annually for participation in these events is allowed.*

Education Expenses

Expenses for education are reimbursable up to \$250 per foster parent per licensing year. Respite only families will be reimbursed up to \$100. Education expenses may be pre-paid directly to the educational resource, or foster parents may be reimbursed after providing receipts and a certificate of completion. Education expenses for reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days of the education. If foster parents fail to provide documentation of completion for pre-paid education, Family Alternatives may require reimbursement.

Foster parents' education allowance may be used for:

- Pre-approved education
- Airfare, lodging costs associated with education
- Conference fees
- Child-care expenses while attending education or support meetings (maximum of \$10 per hour per child, not to exceed \$30 per hour regardless of the number of children without prior authorization from Family Alternatives Licensing Worker). Using education allowance funds for child-care for foster parent's legal children during education or support meetings is at the discretion of the foster parent. Babysitting for

any young person requiring care to allow foster parents to participate in education may be paid through education allowance funds.

- Trainings required for in-home substitute caregivers when approved in advance by the Licensing Worker. Expenses are paid out of the foster parents training allowance and must be submitted within 30 days of the training.

For childcare payment the foster parent must contact their Family Alternatives licensing worker within five working days of the education/group to submit for payment. Foster parents will provide the licensing worker with the name of the person providing care, the training attended, the initials of the children cared for, the amount paid, and the length of time care was provided. Foster parents drive time may be included in the length of time. Payment options are: 1. The foster parent pays the provider and asks to be reimbursed or 2. The provider is paid directly by Family Alternatives by check (please see respite policy for payment timelines). The amount paid for child-care is subtracted from the foster parent's annual training allowance.

Foster parents' education allowance may not be used for:

- Overnight accommodations for education held in the greater Twin Cities area
- Travel mileage reimbursement for meetings sponsored by Family Alternatives

Eligibility for Education Funds

Foster families who have not had a youth placed or provided respite in their home within the past 365 days are not eligible to use education funds.

Failure to meet Education Requirement

Step 1: A Correction Order will notify the family that education requirements must be met within three months. Foster parents may not accept youth for placement/shelter, including new respite, until their training is completed.

Step 2: If after three months, education requirements remain unmet, a second correction order or a variance will be issued in accordance with step 1. Placement restrictions will continue.

Step 3: At six months, a variance or a recommendation for a fine of \$200 will be considered when education requirements have not yet been met and two correction orders have been issued.

Step 4: If overdue and current education requirements are not met by the following licensing date, Family Alternatives will consult with DHS to determine further action.

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Foster Parent Payment

Payment System

MAPCY: Foster parent payment is determined by the age of the young person, which is considered the Basic Maintenance Rate. In addition, MAPCY assessments are completed at the time of each new placement.

The placing county must complete a MAPCY assessment with the foster parents within the first 30 days of placement. MAPCY Legislation requires that foster parents perspective be considered in determining the level. Family Alternatives workers will support throughout the process.

[MAPCY Child Domains Ages 0-12](#)

[MAPCY Youth Domains Ages 13 and older](#)

For young people in the first 30 days of an *initial placement* (those who have never been placed prior to this placement) payment will be at MAPCY level D for the first thirty days of placement.

The foster parent must notify Family Alternatives when a MAPCY level has not been established within 30 days of placement. Their Family Alternatives worker will follow up with the MAPCY Coordinator.

MAPCY assessments are also to be completed six months following initial placement and annually thereafter. Foster parents may request support from their licensing worker with each assessment. The entire MAPCY instrument should be reviewed with the county MAPCY assessor for all assessments and reassessments. Foster parents may also request a reassessment whenever there is a change in the young person's care needs.

Per Diem Decrease

When the foster parent reimbursement rate is decreased without notification to Family Alternatives, the Family Alternatives Licensing Worker will contact the county worker to determine whether payment can or will be reset. Whenever foster parents have been overpaid, and the situation is not resolved with the county, foster parents will be notified and Family Alternatives will recoup the per diem difference from the foster parents.

Additional Child Care Expenses

Regular and routine expenses for care of children are reimbursed through the foster parent's per diem. Some counties have funds available for extracurricular activities, bikes, camp, driver's education, graduation expenses and vacation. Reimbursement or payment for these expenses requires pre-approval from the county worker. The Family Alternatives worker will follow each county's procedure for reimbursement. In most cases, Family Alternatives will bill for the expense, which sometimes requires the foster parent provide receipts.

Foster parents will be paid by check on the payment day immediately following Family Alternatives receiving reimbursement from the county. All checks will be mailed to foster parents and are not available for personal pick up.

Payment Methods

Per diem: All foster parent payments must come through Family Alternatives. Foster parents are paid for placements by direct deposit by the 15th of every month for care provided the preceding month.

Paid respite: Please refer to the respite/substitute care policy for payment procedures.

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Grievance Procedures

For Foster Parents and Applicants

If a foster parent disagrees with an agency policy, decision, or service, a grievance may be filed within 30 days of the precipitating incident. Grievances are managed as follows:

Step 1: The foster parent will be invited to meet with the Family Alternatives licensing worker and the worker's supervisor within ten working days of the request to attempt to resolve the issue. The licensing worker will provide a written response within five working days of that meeting.

Step 2: If the issue is not resolved to the foster parent's satisfaction, a meeting with Family Alternatives Executive Director, the supervisor, and the licensing worker may be requested. This meeting will be held within ten working days of the request and a written response will be provided within five working days of that meeting.

Step 3: If the issue is not resolved to the foster parent's satisfaction, the parent has ten working days to request a meeting with Family Alternatives Board of Directors. The board must schedule a meeting within 30 days and provide a written response within 15 days of that meeting. If the board decides the grievance is a social work practice issue which cannot be resolved internally, it will contract with an outside, neutral, and informed party for arbitration.

For Young People in Care and Their Legal Guardians

Every foster family must have a written complaint and grievance procedure, permitting persons served by the program and their authorized representatives to bring a grievance to the highest level of authority in the program. The foster parent's grievance procedure must be reviewed with and made available to those in care and/or their family/legal representative. *The Foster Parent Grievance Procedure* will be discussed at Initial Placement Support Plan meetings.

Foster parents are required to report to Family Alternatives and the county worker any written complaint or grievance from a young person, family member or legal representative, as well as reporting the resolution. Foster parents are required to supply the office phone numbers of all support team members to the young person and family/legal representative upon request.

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Household Membership

Foster parents must notify Family Alternatives prior to any change in household membership. A NetStudy 2.0 background study must be completed for all adults, all children 13 and older who are household members, and any child age ten to twelve with reasonable cause*. All persons living in the foster parent's household must be included on the Minnesota Adoption and Foster Care Application (DHS-4258A) [H4b Family Systems FAMILY Child Foster Care 3324 \(8-16\)](#) at the time of licensing and re-licensing.

Whenever possible, authorization for a NetStudy 2.0 background study must be completed *prior to persons moving into the foster home*. This includes any previous household member returning to the home after an absence of more than 120 days.

Family Alternatives must be notified prior to a non-household adult staying overnight in the foster home. An adult staying in the home for less than two weeks can be considered a guest and notification is the only requirement. An adult staying in the home longer than two weeks will be considered a household member and all requirements must be met.

Background studies are never conducted for children or adults placed in foster care.

The Family Alternatives licensing worker, supervisor, and foster parent will discuss the role of adults living in the home, and determine whether the adult is in a parenting role. Any adult taking a parenting role must undergo a licensing assessment. Any adult taking a parenting role must undergo the licensing assessment process and meet all requirements to become a licensed provider. When a person is to be added to the license, follow the Assessment and Licensing Policy section on adding a household member to the license. The foster parent's licensing worker will assist through the process.

*Reasonable cause means information or circumstances exist which provide articulable suspicion that further pertinent information may exist concerning an individual. There is reasonable cause when, but not limited to, receiving a report from the individual, the license holder, or a third party indicating the individual has a history that would disqualify the individual or that may pose a risk to the health or safety of children in care.

Please refer to the following link for answers to frequently asked questions regarding background studies. <https://mn.gov/dhs/general-public/background-studies/faqs/>

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Infant/Young Children Placements

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and Abusive Head Trauma Training

Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.50, requires Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) education before caring for a child through five years of age. Foster parents must complete the training prior to noting this age group on their Statement of Intended Use form. Respite and Substitute Care Providers must meet the same requirements.

A resource for this education is:

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16_188848

Foster parents must provide Family Alternatives with documentation of the training. Documentation can be obtained from the website and printed and signed following completion.

DHS requires SUID and AHT training be completed every five years.

Child Passenger Restraint Education

All foster parents whose population as denoted on their Statement of Intended Use includes children under age eight years old must follow the Child Passenger Restraint Training Policy.

Crib Safety

The Department of Human Services Home Safety Checklist requires that a safe crib be in use for children age birth to one year. The training for SUIDS defines the elements of a safe crib. Though not required, cribs are also often used for children older than one year of age. A pack and play, when checked to insure there are no tears or other safety concerns, may be used for sleeping for no more than 30 days.

Prior to any child in care sleeping in a crib, the foster parent and Family Alternatives worker must determine the manufacturer, model and serial number in order to verify the crib is not included on the recall list at www.cpsc.gov. If the manufacturer, model, and/or serial number are not available the crib cannot be approved. Upon completing this check, the foster parent and licensing worker will sign the Family Alternatives Safe Crib Verification Form for inclusion in the file. This process will be completed at the time of placement of any child who will sleep in a crib.

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Initial Foster Care Phone Calls

Initial foster care phone calls, also referred to as comfort calls, are conversations between caregivers of young people in foster care and parents to discuss efforts to ensure well-being.

County and tribal workers are expected to coordinate initial phone calls between foster parents and a child's parents or guardians to establish connections and encourage information-sharing. At the earliest stage of placement an initial call builds connections, supporting children's transitions.

Parents know their child best and can help foster parents understand how to best meet individual needs and preferences. A conversation between parents and foster care providers may minimize the impact of separation. Initial calls begin a partnership for shared caregiving. (Direct contact between children and their parents requires prior authorization from the placing agency).

Placing workers will inform and prepare parents and foster parents, providing an explanation and purpose. Placing agency and Family Alternatives workers will provide support during or after the call if there are questions or concerns.

Initial calls are made at the time of placement, outside the presence of children/youth. Calls may be initiated in several ways:

- Placing worker/Family Alternatives worker and foster parents call parent together.
- Placing worker/Family Alternatives worker calls parent to ask if they are willing to participate in an initial call and facilitates a 3-way call.
- Foster parent is given contact information and makes the call to parents.

Foster Parents should give parents information about the environment and care provided including routine, activities and how the child is doing. Discussion may include the following information from parents about their children that will help foster parents better understand and meet needs:

- Current functioning and behavior
- Medical needs
- Educational needs
- Developmental needs
- History and past experience
- Religious and cultural needs
- Connections with a community, school or faith community
- Interests and talents
- Relationships with other caregivers, parents, siblings and relatives

Other topics may include:

- Name child goes by
- Strategies to comfort
- Ways to help child stay connected to culture

- Important individuals to child
- Favorite toys, games, food
- Preferred health and hygiene products
- For babies: arrangements to get breast milk and/or type of formula and bottle/nipple that works best

If an initial call is not going well, end it in a calm manner and indicate hope for future communication. If the placing/licensing worker does not participate in the call the foster parent will share information from the call.

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Insurance for Foster Parents

Personal Insurance

All foster parents are required to carry adequate car and homeowner or renter's insurance. (Renters insurance is required in order to provide youth in care with recourse if their belongings are lost or damaged in an event). Policy declaration pages, which include dates of coverage, are collected at licensing and re-licensing. Umbrella policies are available as attachments to homeowner policies and protect foster parents in the event of a lawsuit regarding foster care and the actions of young people in care. Foster parents should inquire of an insurance agent as to an adequate kind and amount of car and homeowner or renter's insurance.

Coverage for Foster Parents provided by Minnesota Joint Underwriters Association

The State of Minnesota provides a damage insurance policy for all licensed foster homes through the Minnesota Joint Underwriters. Contact information for MJUA is 651-222-0484 and www.mjua.org. Foster Parents do not need to apply for this insurance coverage, it is automatically available to licensed providers. This policy covers damage caused by youth in care only to property NOT belonging to the foster family.

Coverage Perimeters of MJUA

Minnesota Statute 245.814 LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR LICENSED PROVIDERS.

Subdivision 1. Insurance for foster home providers.

The commissioner of human services shall within the appropriation provided purchase and provide insurance to individuals licensed as foster home providers to cover their liability for:

- (1) injuries or property damage caused or sustained by persons in foster care in their home; and
- (2) actions arising out of alienation of affections sustained by the birth parents of a foster child.

Coverage shall apply to all foster homes licensed by the Department of Human Services to the extent that the provisions of the standard homeowner's or automobile insurance policy do not cover the liability. The insurance shall not cover property owned by the individual foster home provider, damage caused intentionally by a person over 12 years of age, *or property damage arising out of business pursuits or the operation of any vehicle, machinery, or equipment.*

Additional information is available at:

www.mjua.org/uploads/5/7/7/2/57723685/foster_provider_liability_memo.pdf

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Leave of Absence

A foster parent may request a leave of absence only when no young people are in placement in the home. A leave of absence must be requested in writing and cannot exceed 12 months. The annual re-licensing must be completed during leave. The annual training requirement will be pro-rated according to the length of the leave; however, DHS training requirements in statute (Mental Health and FASD) may not be waived.

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Licensing Investigations

Investigations of Licensed Homes

Mandatory Reporting: Family Alternatives foster parents and licensing workers will adhere to Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556 Maltreatment of Minors and 626.55 Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults. All reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect of children occurring within a foster home or in the community will be made to Child Protection in the county where the alleged abuse or neglect occurred.

<http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/child-protection/contact-us/>.

All reports concerning maltreatment of vulnerable adults will be made to Common Entry Point. http://registrations.dhs.state.mn.us/WebManRpt/Who_CEP4.html

Family Alternatives Worker Role

Family Alternatives will take emergency measures to protect children in placement and will not under any circumstances inform foster parents of allegations prior to contact from the appropriate Child/Adult Protection agency. Family Alternatives will continue to respond to the foster parents about all other aspects of placements. The Family Alternatives worker will contact the county investigator in order to participate in interviews as allowed.

Family Alternatives workers will notify placing agency workers whenever a report is accepted for investigation by either Child/Adult Protection or the Minnesota Department of Human Services, as well as notifying placing workers of Family Alternatives licensing investigations. The Family Alternatives worker will also notify the placing workers of the outcome of any investigation.

Family Alternatives will not refer foster homes for placements while under investigation for maltreatment allegations, or during a licensing investigation.

Family Alternatives will take appropriate licensing actions when an investigation indicates maltreatment and/or licensing violations have occurred. A maltreatment finding is automatically a licensing violation and may be a disqualification from licensure as determined by DHS Background Studies Division.

Family Alternatives will not divulge the identity of a reporter of suspected abuse, neglect or licensing violations to foster parents.

Foster Parent Child Protection/Vulnerable Adult Reports

There are times foster parents receive information regarding possible child or vulnerable adult maltreatment. All suspected maltreatment must be reported to the county in which the suspected maltreatment occurred. There are times foster parents will be required to make a Child Protection report about incidents that occur in their home. Family Alternatives workers will assist foster parents in understanding and making a CP/Vulnerable Adult maltreatment report. Reports can be made via the internet or phone

call. All verbal reports must be followed up with a written report. Most counties have forms on their web site.

Licensing Investigation Process

Upon receipt of information of a possible licensing violation, Family Alternatives Inquiry Team will determine whether the information received warrants initiation of a licensing investigation. When determined necessary, Family Alternatives will conduct a thorough investigation in order to determine whether violations occurred, including:

1. Record possible licensing violations as indicated by the complaint information into Family Alternatives Complaint Log, noting specific rule and/or law citations.
2. Determine, when there are safety concerns, whether children should be moved from the home while the investigation is conducted.
3. Assign two workers, neither of who is the family's licensing worker.
4. Notify placing workers of youth in the home of an investigation.
5. Schedule and conduct interviews with youth in care, collaterals and additional people who are noted to have information regarding the complaint. All of these interviews are conducted before informing the foster family of the complaint or allegation.
6. Invite foster parents to be interviewed
7. Review the information collected and make licensing determinations
8. Notify foster parents of licensing determinations:
 - Violation did not occur – A clearance letter is sent to the family
 - Licensing violation(s) did occur and are determined to be neither critical or chronic – Correction Orders are written and reviewed with the foster parent
 - Licensing Violation(s) did occur and are determined to be chronic and/or critical – a Licensing Action Recommendation is submitted to DHS and the family is notified a recommendation has been made.

Records Retention

If an investigation report is unsubstantiated and no licensing violations have occurred, records will be kept in the foster parent file for a period of 4 years. If an investigation report is substantiated, and licensing violations have occurred, records will be kept in the foster parent file indefinitely.

Correction Order

A correction order is an internal process used when a violation of the Licensing Rule or Family Alternatives policies or Foster Parent Contract/Agreement has been determined. A correction order will be completed and given to the foster parent within 45 days of a determination of a licensing violation. The correction order will inform parents of the right to request reconsideration of the correction order through DHS.

In order to maintain this as an internal process, all of the following conditions must be met:

1. The violation does not imminently endanger the health, safety, or rights of children in placement;
2. The violation is not serious or chronic; and
3. The violation will be corrected within a reasonable time.

A copy of the correction order will be kept in the foster parent's file and the signed copy scanned and saved in the database. A correction order will include a specific time period for correcting the violation.

Licensing Action Recommendation

A Licensing Action recommendation is a recommendation to DHS for denial, suspension, revocation, or conditional foster care licensing. The grounds for revocation or denial of a foster care license include, but are not limited to:

1. A disqualification under HSLA (Human Services Licensing Act) Chapter 245A, Subpart 3;
2. A false statement knowingly made by the license holder on the license application;
3. Failure or refusal to provide the Commissioner access to the home and adjoining property, documents, persons served, or staff;
4. Recurring failure to comply with standards in Licensing Rule;
5. Severe or recurring failure to comply with capacity limits
6. Licensing violations that occur while the license is conditional or suspended.
7. Suspension of a foster care license.

Required Notifications

Family Alternatives must inform the foster parents of the recommendation for a licensing action in writing.

Written notice will be given to the parents or guardians of all the children in placement in that home. This notice must state that a licensing action has been recommended and that the foster parents will be informed of the Commissioner's action on the recommendation. The county or counties with children in the foster home and the county in which the family resides must be notified if a licensing action has been recommended and again, following the DHS decision.

Re-licensing

When the foster family is approaching the date of on year re-licensure at the time of an alleged violation and an investigation is in process, or when a licensing action recommendation is pending, the Family Alternatives Re-licensing Coordinator will send a *Request for Extension* to DHS. When a license revocation has been issued by DHS and the license holder has appealed, the re-licensing coordinator will submit a *request for a temporary provisional license*. The only option to close a foster care license while a licensing action is in process is to request *Closure Pending Investigation*. This action allows DHS to follow through on a licensing action; however, the family is shown as closed on the DHS Licensing Lookup page. <http://licensinglookup.dhs.state.mn.us/>

The Department of Human Services will notify the foster parent and Family Alternatives of licensing action. The notification includes appeal rights, requirements and timelines. Family Alternatives will notify the foster parent when DHS determines no licensing action is required.

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Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults Reporting Policy

Overview

All youth in care over the age of 18 are considered to be vulnerable adults. All foster parents intending to serve vulnerable adults must establish and enforce written policies and procedures related to suspected or alleged maltreatment, and orient youth and mandated reporters who are under the control of the foster parent to these procedures. All foster parents who care for youth ages 18 to 21 must have a vulnerable adult reporting policy including the telephone number for the Common Entry Point posted in a prominent location and available upon request.

Training Requirements & Timelines – Licensed Providers and Care Providers

Foster parents and each mandated reporter who supervises the young adults must complete vulnerable adult training within 72 hours of serving vulnerable adults and annually thereafter. Foster parents must complete the annual training prior to licensing.

The training is available at

<http://registrations.dhs.state.mn.us/WebManRpt/>

Orientation with Young Adults in Care

The foster parent must provide an orientation on the vulnerable adult reporting procedures to all 18 to 21-year-old youth receiving services within 72 hours of placement or of their 18th birthday. The orientation will include the telephone number for the Common Entry Point (**844-880-1574**).

Safety Plan

All foster parents serving vulnerable adults will develop and enforce a household safety plan and create an individual safety plan with each youth ages 18 to 21. Individual and family prevention plans must be reviewed annually.

Documentation Requirements

Foster parents must have a certificate of completion of their training and Vulnerable Adult Reporting Trainings in their Family Alternatives file. Foster parents must maintain records of training completed by each mandated reporter (anyone providing face-to-face care, supervision and/or medication assistance) who is under the control of the license holder.

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Mandated Reporting

Mandatory Reporter Definitions

All Family Alternatives foster parents and licensing workers are designated by Minnesota as Mandated Reporters. Mandated reporters are professionals or professional's delegate identified by law who **MUST** make a report if they have reason to believe:

- Abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult has occurred.
- A child is being neglected or abused, or
- A child has been neglected or abused within the preceding three years.
- A woman is pregnant and has used a controlled substance for a non-medical purpose during the pregnancy

Reporting

DHS has provided guidance for making reports on their website.

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_000152

Mandated reporters must report information regarding children to the local police department, local welfare agency, or county sheriff within 24 hours.

<http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/child-protection/contact-us/>.

All reports concerning maltreatment of vulnerable adults will be made to Common Entry Point. http://registrations.dhs.state.mn.us/WebManRpt/Who_CEP4.html

If a foster parent makes a report of suspected abuse of a child or vulnerable adult who is in foster care in a Family Alternatives home, the foster parent must then also report the information to Family Alternatives within 24 hours.

The immediate report to the police or social services department can be made via the internet by filling out forms provided on the county's web site, or via phone. All oral reports must be followed by a written report to the same agency or department within 24 hours, exclusive of weekends and holidays. Some counties will provide the form to be completed.

The written report must include the child's name, date of birth, and name of the child's parent, guardian, or other person responsible for his or her care. The report must describe the complaint, the nature of any injuries and include the name and address of the reporter. Licensing workers will assist foster parents with reporting and follow up if requested. *This form cannot be emailed because the report contains confidential and identifying information. It is permissible to fax the form to a secure fax as identified by the government entity to which the report is being filed.*

A copy of the written report must be sent to Family Alternatives when it pertains to children in placement in Family Alternatives homes.

Persons making child/adult abuse/maltreatment reports are immune from any civil or criminal liability that may develop from the allegation if they are acting in good faith and exercise due care in making a report. Mandatory Reporters who fail to make a report can be found guilty of a misdemeanor. State statutes do not provide immunity to any person for failure to make a required report.

Any person who knowingly or recklessly makes a false report under the provisions of Minnesota law shall be liable in a civil suit for any damages suffered by the person or persons so reported and for any punitive damages set by the court or jury. The following are definitions of physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse:

Definitions

PHYSICAL ABUSE: Any physical injury or mental injury or threatened injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child’s care, or any physical injury or mental injury that cannot reasonably be explained by the child’s history of injuries.

NEGLECT: Failure by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for a child’s care to supply a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical care when reasonably able to do so, or failure to protect a child from conditions or actions which imminently and seriously endanger the child’s physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so, and failure to take steps to ensure that a child is educated in accordance with state law. Neglect includes prenatal exposure to a controlled substance for a non-medical purpose.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Any sexual conduct as defined in Minnesota Criminal Sexual Conduct Statutes inflicted by parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child’s care. Sexual contact includes intentional touching of genitals, groin, inner thigh, buttocks, or breast of the child with or without clothes on. Sexual penetration includes sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal intercourse, or any intrusion into genital or anal openings. Sexual abuse includes threatened sexual abuse.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE USE DURING PREGNANCY: A pregnant woman who has engaged during pregnancy in habitual or excessive use, for a non-medical purpose, of any of the following substances or their derivatives: opium, cocaine, heroin, phencyclidine, methamphetamine, amphetamine, tetrahydrocannabinol, or alcohol.

Last Updated	1/2017
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Medical Equipment and Training

Whenever caring for a child who relies on medical equipment to sustain or monitor life the following is required:

- 1) The foster parent must have received training from a certified health care professional to operate the equipment the child needs. This training requirement must be reviewed and documented (using the DHS Foster Care Training and Skills Form) annually in the parent's file. This includes all respite providers.
- 2) The foster parent must have completed training in the individual child's particular needs. The child's previous or current caregiver can provide this training.

No child requiring medical equipment to sustain or monitor life may be placed in any foster home without these requirements being met. This includes respite placements.

Do Not Resuscitate/ Do Not Intubate Orders

If a DNR/DNI order is in effect for a child in care, copies must be in the foster home and the child's file. In the event of a life-threatening situation, the foster parent must call 911 and show emergency personnel the DNR/DNI order.

Last Updated	1/2017
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Medical, Dental and Optical Care

Foster parents are responsible for meeting routine and emergency health care needs, and must keep a record for every youth in care. This must include all medical information including a record of illnesses and dates health care was provided.

Physical Health Care

Family Alternatives and the foster parents will ensure that every child entering placement has a physical examination within 12 months prior to or 30 days after placement and at least annually thereafter. Documentation of physical examination information completed prior to placement must be secured from the placing county. If not secured, a physical examination must be scheduled within 30 days of placement.

Foster families must report all health care, including date, provider and pertinent information to the Family Alternatives worker. Specific information will be documented in placement support plans.

Dental Care

Family Alternatives and the foster parents will ensure that every child entering placement has a dental examination within 6 months prior to or 30 days after placement and at least every six months for children three years of age and older. There must be documentation of dental examinations occurring prior to placement with Family Alternatives, or a dental examination and cleaning must be scheduled within 30 days of placement. Dental examinations for children age one to three should be discussed and determined by placement support team members.

Foster parents must report all dental care including date, provider and pertinent information to the Family Alternatives worker. Ongoing dental information will be documented in the child's placement support plan.

Under special circumstances, MA will cover the cost of orthodontia and/or oral surgery. When a need has been determined, a specialist must be consulted, and the recommendations documented and followed.

Special Medical Needs

Foster parents must notify Family Alternatives of health care updates as they occur. The support team will identify and review the child's specialized medical needs at each support plan meeting, determining and updating accountabilities necessary to assure the areas of concern are being addressed.

Insurance

Every child in foster care is eligible for Medicaid (Medical Assistance Insurance). There are times the child's legal guardian also carries medical insurance for the child/youth. Foster parents will be given the necessary insurance information at the time of placement. The county worker will arrange for the foster parent to receive a medical insurance card.

This insurance should be used whenever a child sees a health care provider. Some Medical Assistance PPOs or a parent’s health care plan may limit health care to certain providers. Medication and office copays, when not covered by medical assistance are **not** the responsibility of foster parents, and a plan for payment should be worked out at placement. If a bill is received, the family will contact the county worker. **Under no circumstances should a foster parent pay a foster child’s medical bill.**

Consent for Treatment

Under no circumstances should a foster parent sign forms authorizing health care treatment. At the time of placement, the legal guardian is required to sign Family Alternatives *Child/Youth Consent Form*, which authorizes medical care. Foster parents are provided with a copy of the form and must bring a copy to all health care appointments.

Young Adults in Placement

When youth in care turn 18, foster parent requirements regarding health care accountabilities may change. The team must determine roles and responsibilities during Youth in Transition Conferences or Placement Support Plan meetings. These decisions must be documented on Family Alternatives documents. Foster parents are expected to provide coaching and guidance to emerging adults in assessing and meeting their medical and dental needs.

Medical Transportation

Medical Assistance reimburses foster parents for mileage and parking costs accrued for approved health care appointments for children in placement. The MNET Trip Log, <https://www.mtm-inc.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/MNET-Trip-Log.pdf> or FamilyAlternatives.org - Parent Resources – is submitted as instructed on the form. This is the only form of foster parent payment that is not coordinated by Family Alternatives. A separate form must be used for each child/youth.

There are times transportation with a medical transport company is arranged to provide transportation to health care appointments. For youth under 18 years old support team approval must be granted prior to setting up alternative medical transportation.

Last Updated	3/2021
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Medication

Administering Medication

Medication must be administered by authorized care providers as prescribed by the physician. Prescription medication must be given exactly as prescribed, in individual doses, and may not be discontinued or altered without physician approval. All possible side effects must be reported to the prescribing physician.

Prior to administering supplements foster parents will consult with the child's medical provider. Over the counter medication must be administered in accordance with dosage instructions found on the container.

Medication to be administered during school hours must be provided to the school by the foster parent in an original prescription bottle. Schools require written authorization from the prescribing physician to administer the medication, and may ask for assistance in securing the authorization.

Storage

Medication must be inaccessible to children and vulnerable adults as determined by age and developmental/emotional abilities. Medication must not be stored with or next to food products (If refrigeration is necessary, medication must be in a well-marked container).

Schedule II controlled substances are prescription medications affecting mental activity, behavior or perception. **Schedule II controlled substances must be stored in a locked area.**

Safety Precautions

Physicians are required to secure written authorization from the legal guardian of the youth in care when prescribing mood altering medication. Foster parents are not allowed to authorize.

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Placement Procedure

Referral Procedures

Family Alternatives goal is to match a young person to a foster family that will best meet their needs. The county of responsibility initiates/requests placements in Family Alternatives licensed homes.

Licensing workers will consider homes according to skills of the parents, availability, age and needs of the child, community and family resources available, and other children in the home. Family Alternatives workers refer children for possible placement only when they match criteria specified in the family's Statement of Intended Use. Licensing workers cannot refer foster families who are under investigation, corrective action or licensing action.

Licensing workers contact homes considered and provide information about the child from the referral. Whenever a family states an interest in having the youth placed in their home, the Family Alternatives worker notifies the placing county. The next step is often to schedule a meeting in which additional information is discussed about the youth and the family in order to decide whether to proceed with a pre-placement meeting/visit.

If a county contacts a foster parent directly, the foster parent must refer the person to their Family Alternatives worker to request placement for a child.

Pre-placement procedures

Pre-placements are meant to allow time for the youth and foster parent to get to know each other. Depending on the child's age and needs, brief visits may start (one to two hours) and may progress to more lengthy visits. Pre-placement visits are typically scheduled over a weekend. Following the visit, foster parents and youth are consulted regarding whether they would like to pursue placement.

Foster parents do not receive reimbursement for pre-placement visits that do not include an overnight stay. In pre-placements of three (3) days or less, foster parents will be reimbursed for each day. In pre-placements of four (4) days or more, foster parents will be reimbursed for each night. Pre-placements are billed at the base rate in accordance with the child's age. When children are subsequently placed, the MAPCY payment will be retroactive to include pre-placement dates.

Placement

A placement date is determined as agreed upon by foster parents and the county. The foster parent must notify their Family Alternatives worker of placement arrangements. When a child is placed in a Family Alternatives foster home, foster parents must read, sign, and date the referral indicating they have received the information.

The Family Alternatives worker will complete the Initial Placement Agreement and provide a copy to the foster parent within one week of placement to assure the child's short-term needs are met. Within 30 days of placement, the licensing worker is required

to convene a placement support plan meeting in which a Placement Support Plan will be developed. The initial Comfort Call between foster parents and the young person’s family will be documented in the Initial Placement Agreement and the initial Placement Support Plan.

The placing county must complete a MAPCY assessment with the foster parents within the first 30 days of placement. *The Foster Parent Payment Policy* outlines this process in detail.

Last Updated	4/2021
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Referral Bonus

There is always a need for dedicated foster parents who are essential to the work of Family Alternatives. We are continually preparing and licensing families to meet this need.

Since our foster parents have direct experience with our agency, we appreciate the referrals of families for possible licensing. \$100 will be disbursed to current foster parents when a family recommended by them completes the licensing process and opens a license with Family Alternatives.

Last Updated	7/2021
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Re-licensing and Annual Evaluation

The Licensing Rule requires a bi-annual re-licensing and an annual evaluation of each foster family.

The following are situations in which licenses **must** be renewed annually:

- Foster parent currently in a licensing action; i.e., probation suspension, etc.
- Foster parent with a variance to a disqualification.
- Foster parent in their first year of service with Family Alternatives.

The following are situations in which licenses **may** be renewed annually:

- Foster parent with a number of substantiated licensing complaints.
- Foster parent failed to satisfy previous correction orders.

The Re-licensing Coordinator will send required re-licensing documents to foster parents at least 60 days before expiration of their license. A meeting will be scheduled in the foster home prior to the expiration of the license. Foster parents must respond within three weeks of the Re-licensing Coordinators attempts to schedule a home visit

At the time of Department of Human Services re-licensing (bi-annually), the following will be completed:

1. Minnesota Adoption and Foster Care Application (DHS 4258A).
2. Home Safety Checklist (DHS 0644).
3. Foster Parent Education Form for each parent.
4. Individual Fact Sheet (all household members 18 and older) (DHS 4258B)
5. Child Foster Care Statement of Intended Use (MN Rules Section 2906.3000, subp 4)
6. Minnesota Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Assessment Update (DHS 4258E)

If a foster parent has failed to meet re-licensing requirements, the following steps, as indicated in Minnesota statute 245A may be followed:

- Correction Order
- Second Correction Order with possible recommendation for fine
- Licensing Action Recommendation

For further information on this refer to the *Licensing Investigation* policy.

In a foster family's off year an evaluation during their licensing month must be completed and the following placed in the foster parent file:

1. Foster Parent Education Form for each parent
2. Home Safety Checklist
3. Annual Evaluation

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Respite Care/Substitute Care

Respite Care is temporary paid care of children in a licensed foster home other than the home where the child is placed. Substitute Care is an approved paid provider coming into the licensed home where the child is placed to care for children. 14 days of paid respite is provided to Family Alternatives foster parents each licensing year. The 14 days do not carry over from one year to the next. The foster parent's per diem reimbursement will not be interrupted during respite.

Foster parents providing care to children in the **Intensive Program** receive an additional one day per month for those children. This does not accumulate or carry over from one month to the next.

Before providing care paid for by Family Alternatives, substitute care providers must meet the following requirements:

Provider Requirements:

- At least 18 years of age
- Approved background study (Background study clearance is required anytime Family Alternatives pays for substitute care whether overnight or not).
- Signed statement of good health
- At least 6 hours training or 20 hours experience caring for children with needs specific to the child/youth being cared for
- One hour Children's Mental Health training annually
(www.anokacounty.us/635/Mandatory-Training)
- One hour Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders training annually
(www.anokacounty.us/635/Mandatory-Training)

Additional requirements for providers caring for children under age six

- Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Training
(www.anokacounty.us/635/Mandatory-Training)
- Abusive Head Trauma Training
(www.anokacounty.us/635/Mandatory-Training)

Additional requirements for providers caring for children under age eight

- Documentation of Child Passenger Restraint training prior to driving

Additional requirements for providers caring for youth with medical equipment that sustains life

- Documentation of training on medical equipment

Additional requirements for providers caring for youth age 18 or over

- Vulnerable Adult requirements

Care provided in an unlicensed home is not considered respite care and Family Alternatives will not provide payment. Care in the licensed home by a provider who has

not met the requirements of a substitute care provider will not be paid by Family Alternatives.

At the time of the Placement Support Plan meetings a plan for respite/substitute care must be established and/or reviewed. The plan must include introduction of the child to the provider well in advance of any care occurring.

Family Alternatives and county workers must always know where children in care are and be provided with the name, address, and phone number of the care provider. When the Support Team has approved consistent ongoing arrangements, Family Alternatives and placing workers must still be notified of specific arrangements in advance.

Respite and Substitute Care Procedures for Children in Placement:

Foster parents using respite or substitute care in non-emergency situations must obtain prior approval from the Family Alternatives licensing worker. Failure to obtain prior approval will result in non-payment and a Correction Order. For emergency respite or substitute care foster parents must notify their licensing worker as soon as possible.

Respite and substitute care will not be approved for a child's first month in placement, for holidays, for a child's birthday, or if a child would miss school. Foster parents providing respite care must notify their licensing worker prior to providing respite.

A Respite Provider Information Form must be completed by the foster parent and given to the provider. The form is available at <https://familyalternatives.org/>.

Completion of this form will be initiated at the initial Placement Support Plan meeting with details added for each specific instance of respite or substitute care. Foster parents must notify providers of their Drug/Alcohol and Discipline Policies. Payment for respite and substitute care, other than the two weeks paid by Family Alternatives, is arranged by the foster families and can include an exchange agreement.

Additional County Paid Respite/Substitute Care:

There are times that the county of responsibility will pay for additional respite or substitute care for children in Family Alternatives homes. Written approval from the county must be received in advance.

Payment Procedures

Within 24 hours of when respite/substitute care placement ends, the child's foster parent will complete the Respite Payment Form at <https://familyalternatives.org/>. Accounting will issue a check to the care provider within 12 days of receipt of the form. If there are concerns regarding payment foster parents will contact only their own licensing worker.

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Roles and Relationships

Family Alternatives Licensing Worker and Foster Parents

The Family Alternatives licensing worker serves as the support team coordinator and as the primary support person for the foster family. The licensing worker is available for consultation, advice, counsel, support, and venting. The Family Alternatives licensing worker is the primary link in communicating with other support team members. It is essential that Family Alternatives licensing workers are made aware of any changes or unusual problems developing in the family.

The Family Alternatives licensing worker is responsible for ensuring the foster home operates in accordance with the Licensing Rule that governs foster care placement in compliance with the laws of the State of Minnesota. The family's licensing worker will maintain licensing responsibilities for the family. Licensing or parenting concerns, as well as youth's needs and progress will be addressed and documented by the Family Alternatives licensing worker.

The Family Alternatives licensing worker is responsible for developing and monitoring the placement support plan. The licensing worker will meet at least monthly with the child to monitor the placement and build a relationship. The Family Alternatives licensing worker coordinates services with the child and the support team.

Family Alternatives licensing workers are contacted when allegations of abuse or neglect are made regarding foster parents. It is the licensing worker's role to report allegations to Family Alternatives Inquiry Team for determination.

Referring County Worker

The county worker is legally responsible for the child in a court-ordered placement. In a voluntary placement, the county worker acts as the liaison between Family Alternatives, the county, and the legal parent. The county worker attends all meetings, approves all payments regarding the child, and has final decision-making authority throughout the child's placement.

Child's Family

Family relationships are an important part of a child's life and including family in the placement support plan meetings is good practice. It is important for the Family Alternatives licensing worker and foster family to develop a working relationship with family members in order to meet the child's needs.

Therapist

Children in care are often involved in therapy. Therapists offer support to children, families, and foster families. It is important for Family Alternatives licensing workers and foster parents to work closely with therapists. Foster parents are expected to schedule and coordinate rides for therapy.

Guardian ad Litem

Young people who are court ordered to foster care will usually have a Guardian ad Litem. The Guardian ad Litem's function is to speak in court regarding the best interest of the child. Guardian ad Litem's are usually invited to meetings scheduled for the child and may visit the child.

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School

Foster parents are responsible for registering children into school. County workers should provide school history information within five days of placement. This will allow the new school to obtain previous records, decide appropriate grade placement, and arrange for any special education services necessary.

The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that promotes stability, access, and academic success for homeless youth. Children living in emergency or transitional shelters or awaiting foster care placement are considered homeless for the purpose of the McKinney-Vento Act. The Act requires that schools immediately enroll homeless children in school and provide access to transportation and free lunch even without records normally required for enrollment. The Act also sometimes allows children to remain in their school even if their situation has caused them to move outside of the school district. In this case, the school district must consider arrangements for the child to stay in the school at which he/she was last enrolled, including providing transportation.

Foster parents serve as primary advocates and contact persons with school. They will keep support team members informed of the child's progress and needs and notify support team members of all school conferences or meetings. The child's teacher or counselor should be kept informed of any significant changes in the child's situation that may affect behavior. For school aged youth a parent, or substitute care provider (as agreed upon by the support team) must be available to meet the needs of the youth should s/he be ill or have school difficulties requiring the youth to be picked up from school or to be out of school.

Many children in care have special educational needs, which may require an Individual Education Plan (IEP). IEPs are typically reviewed twice per year and foster parents will notify all support team members of IEP meetings.

Foster parents are not authorized to sign the IEP unless identified as surrogate parents by the school district. School districts have various requirements for surrogate parenting, but in general, a signed authorization from the legal parent or guardian is required.

All public schools are required to provide special education services for children who qualify for additional services based on behavioral, emotional, intellectual and/or physical disabilities. Special education services are available for children ages infant to 21.

School districts provide screenings and if warranted, early childhood special education for children age birth to 6. Children under age 3 may qualify for in-home services, while children ages 3-6 may receive full or part-time educational services at a school facility, in-home, or a combination of both. Children in foster care, whether qualifying for special education or not, also have priority for enrollment in Head Start programs.

PACER (www.pacer.org) Center is a statewide education organization serving families of children and adults with disabilities. PACER offers workshops, individual assistance, and written information related to education services and can be a resource to work with schools to address a child's special needs.

Private School

A foster parent must discuss enrolling a child in foster care in a private school with the support team and permission must be obtained from the parent or legal guardian. Foster parents take financial responsibility for costs of private education. Some schools may waive tuition when it is understood the child is supported by public funds.

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Sexual Ethics

Living in a family is an intimate experience. Sexual ethics and morality demand that families be very clear about boundaries. Foster parents need to be aware of and communicate personal values and boundaries. In order to effectively parent children from families with values and boundaries that may be different from the foster family, foster parents must be aware of differences and able to address concerns.

Children who have experienced sexual abuse may perceive and interact with others in sexualized ways. In these cases it is important to report the behaviors to the support team. Strategies must be developed to support the child around these behaviors and the emotional issues they represent.

Foster parents must clearly communicate to all in the home which behaviors are permitted and where they are permitted. Children must know expectations concerning appropriate touch, dressing, and bathing. Children need to know family members will respect their privacy and protect them from harm. Rules regarding privacy and intimacy help young people feel safe and secure. It is important to accept and encourage personal boundaries children establish for themselves and to support children in ongoing development of personal boundaries and sexual values.

Foster parents must continue to work on ways to effectively communicate knowledge as well as values concerning sexuality. This includes issues of dress, choice of partners, sexual lifestyle, and entertainment. This communication will enhance the confidence and self-esteem of children and help them make responsible decisions concerning their sexuality and relationships. If foster parents are challenged by choices children in care make, it is important to bring those questions or concerns to the support team.

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Smoking Policy

Youth in foster care shall not be exposed to any type of secondhand smoke (including vaping) in a licensed foster home or any space connected to the home, including a garage, porch, deck, or similar space, or in a motor vehicle. Smoking in outdoor areas on the premises of the home is permitted, except when a child in care is present and exposed to secondhand smoke.

If anyone living in the provider's home smokes the provider must inform the child's county worker prior to placement.

Minnesota Statute 260C.215: Subd. 9. Preventing exposure to secondhand smoke for children in foster care.

(a) A child in foster care shall not be exposed to any type of secondhand smoke in the following settings:

(1) a licensed foster home or any enclosed space connected to the home, including a garage, porch, deck, or similar space; or

(2) a motor vehicle while a foster child is transported.

(b) Smoking in outdoor areas on the premises of the home is permitted, except when a foster child is present and exposed to secondhand smoke.

(c) The home study required in subdivision 4, clause (5), must include a plan to maintain a smoke-free environment for foster children.

(d) If a foster parent fails to provide a smoke-free environment for a foster child, the child-placing agency must ask the foster parent to comply with a plan that includes training on the health risks of exposure to secondhand smoke. If the agency determines that the foster parent is unable to provide a smoke-free environment and that the home environment constitutes a health risk to a foster child, the agency must reassess whether the placement is based on the child's best interests consistent with section [260C.212, subdivision 2](#).

Last Updated	9/2019
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