

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

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

**Original Effective Date:** 11/05/2009  
**Revision Date(s):** 01/01/2019, 09/01/2015  
**Current Revision Date:** 09/01/2022  
**Approved By:** Jacqueline M. Fletcher, Interim Director

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

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

**POLICY**

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

## PROCEDURES

### A. **FAMILY FOSTER HOME RECERTIFICATION**

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

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

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

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

#### 1. **Conducting the Family/Specialized Family Foster Home Recertification**

The caregiver applies for re-certification by completing the JFS 01331 form. The RM is required to schedule visits with each household member based on his or her age development, except foster children. The RM must be available to accommodate foster caregivers and their schedules. At least one visit is made in the home. Note: If the JFS 01331 is not returned to the agency by the date indicated in Section IB of this notice, the certificate will expire.

##### (a) **Safety Audit JFS 01348**

This form serves as a site and safety compliance checklist and requires supervisory signature. Entries are required for each of the 38 questions.

- (b) **Foster Home Supplemental/Special Circumstances Information**  
Ensure recorded information is accurate and in compliance with rules. Record information completely when asked to address and explain certain areas. This form requires signature and supervisory approval.
- (c) **Assessment for Child Placement Update JFS 01385**  
This form includes ten (10) sections requiring completion. Each question must be answered completely. If the home is being considered for a waiver, form (JFS 01376) must be used. This document requires supervisory approval and signature, including a narrative regarding discussion points with each caregiver and all household members according to his or her age development.
- (d) **Applicant Financial Statement JFS 01681**  
The purpose of this form is to determine the ability of the family to afford the added cost of a foster placement(s). The RM examines and determines the income and expenses that make up the family's budget; obtains proof of all household income and expenditures (including pay stubs) per OAC 5101:2-7-02 requirements, and reviews current household expenses in (B) and (E). Once all of the required information is gathered, RM determines (at the agency-level) whether a foster home, with or without placements, can maintain their own family's lifestyle.
- (e) **Alternate Care Arrangements Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-7-08**  
Resource Managers must be aware of significant changes relating to caregivers, (i.e., have they moved, are there new members in their household); inquire (if there are new placements, is caregiver the same) and conduct routine background checks in SACWIS, Common Pleas Court, as well as social service background checks.
- (f) **Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant & All Household Members JFS 01653**  
JFS 01653 form, page (1), Section I requires all applicants and household members to answer a series of questions and provide detailed explanations. These questions need to be asked to determine changes in health status of all caregivers and their family. The RM must conduct a frequent query of those who take medication, determine the frequency and reasons why. The answers obtained may determine if a new JFS 01653 is needed on the individual. Section II, page (2), requires entries to questions, including a signature and name of agency/provider authorized to release information.
- (g) **Criminal Background and Social Services Clearings**  
1) A criminal records check is required for each certified foster caregiver every four (4) years within six (6) months prior to the upcoming re-certification of the caregiver. A criminal records check is also required for any household member who reaches the age of eighteen (18) while living in a certified foster home within ten (10) days of reaching their eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday. This is in accordance with OAC 5101:2-5-09.1.

2) Appointments for fingerprinting are required and can be made by contacting 881-5775 from 8:30-4:00 pm during weekdays. The **“Fingerprint Request Form for Re-certifications/New Household Members and Adoption Updates”** must be faxed or emailed prior to the appointment, or the family may bring the completed form with them.

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

This document is a requirement which assesses the training needs of each caregiver and defines their training needs. The form should be updated as often as necessary and requires supervisory approval and signatures. Note: Because the quarterly training calendars may not be available prior to the development of a plan, Resource Managers must be flexible enough so that when the calendar is available, they can meet with their caregivers and plan the classes according to the scheduled sessions.

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

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

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

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

(k) **Placement Logs**

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

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

The RM must ensure that the foster home has a copy of the ICCA document for each placement in the home and ensure the document is stored in Traverse.

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

Each caregiver should complete and sign this document. It is important that the Resource Manager explains that the response to each of the identified services needs to be evaluated, so that the agency is aware of where changes and improvements are needed. This document should be closely reviewed by the RM, as it serves as an impetus for much discussion and follow-up with the foster home.

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

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

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

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

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

## 1. **Conducting the Adoption Update**

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

(a) **Safety Audit JFS 01348**

This form is to be completed if there is a reason for concern relative to the home's continued safety. Responses are required for each of the 38 questions.

(b) **Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant & All Household Members JFS 01653**

This document should be completed for the applicant and all household members by a licensed physician, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse practitioner or certified nurse-midwife.

(c) **Reference from a Professional (minimum of one)**

This professional must be knowledgeable of the prospective adoptive parent(s) family dynamics; if not available, a personal reference from someone knowledgeable of the adoptive parent(s) family functioning. This person cannot be a relative.

(d) **Assessment for Child Placement JFS 01385** (see section D)

This document captures the updated required information for both a dual and an adoption only home. Waivers and variances are not applicable to the adoption processes.

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

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

(f) **Applicant Financial Statement JFS 01681** (see section D)

This is completed when there is a substantial change in financial circumstances.

(g) **FBI and BCI Criminal Background Check**

The agency shall request that a criminal background check be done and that Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) include information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the criminal records check for an adoptive caregiver and each adult household member.

- 1) A criminal background check is required the fourth year at the time of the update.
- 2) A criminal background check is required when the homestudy expires due to the six-year timeframe, and the adoptive parent requests a new homestudy should be completed.
- 3) A criminal background check is required for each adult living in the household every four years, prior to approving the adoption update.
- 4) Once the criminal records check has been completed, the agency shall conduct continued criminal records checks pursuant to paragraph (E) of OAC 5101:2-48-12.1.

(h) **Water Test**

An approved Ohio water testing laboratory is required if this test is deemed necessary.

(i) **Reassessment of Adoptive Parent(s)**

The visit includes a minimum of one face-to-face home visit with each household member. Interviews may or may not be joint visits.

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

- 1) Upon completion of the update to the adoption homestudy, the RM must approve or deny and provide notification of the decision to the adoption family within ten (10) days of the completed update.
- 2) If decision is to approve the homestudy update, written notification must include: the date of approval; the date of the approved home study and when the approved update will expire.
- 3) If decision is to deny adoption homestudy update, written notification must contain:
  - a) Detailed explanation and reasons on which denial is based.
  - b) Procedures to follow for an agency review - OAC 5101:2-48-24.

**2. Amendments to the Adoption Homestudy**

Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-48-12.2 Paragraphs (A) and (B) outline the changes or circumstances in which a change must be reported. This will be an amendment and is simply a “narrative” of the assessor’s evaluation of the family regarding the changes and shall be completed and attached to the homestudy within thirty (30) days of the agency becoming aware of that change or circumstance. Note: Paragraphs (A) and (B) have provided timelines for some circumstances.

New adult household members living in the adoptive household shall have a JFS 01653 completed within ninety (90) days of the date they became a household member. Within ten (10) working days of the date they became a household member; they shall have a BCI and FBI background check and search check in SACWIS to verify if there’s any record of alleged perpetrator child abuse and neglect report history.

**SEE ALSO:**

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

## **Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual**

Section 6.03: Adoption Procedures

Policy 6.02.01: Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment

Policy 6.02.02: Required Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers

Policy 6.02.03: Foster Parent Pre-Placement and Ongoing Training

Policy 6.02.06: Foster and Adoptive Homestudy Completion

Policy 6.02.07: Joint Foster Care and Adoption Approval Process

Policy 6.03.05: Falsification of Adoptive Application/Homestudy