

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 12:</b> Foster Family Home Licensing	
	<b>Section 07:</b> Initial Licensing Home Visits	
	<b>Effective Date:</b> July 1, 2023	<b>Version:</b> 4

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## POLICY OVERVIEW

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) conducts home visits at prospective foster family homes (FFHs) as part of the initial FFH licensing process. Home visits help DCS determine the family’s ability to provide a safe, stable, and supportive environment for a child placed in their care.

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## PROCEDURE

The licensing worker will conduct a minimum of three (3) visits to the home of the prospective foster family for the purpose of assessing the physical environment of the home and engaging in a thoughtful dialogue with all members of the household about foster parenting and/or adoption.

During the initial licensing process, the licensing worker will:

1. Ensure the applicant has received all necessary initial licensing paperwork during the licensing process using the Initial Licensure Checklist for Foster Family Homes (see policy 12.03 Initial Licensure Documentation);

**Note:** Due to accreditation standards, an FFH applicant licensed by an LCPA may require additional documentation.

2. Schedule the first home visit concurrently with the Pre-service Training phase;
3. Complete the following during the home visits:
  - a. Review and discuss the content of all initial licensing paperwork with the applicant and answer any questions,
  - b. Provide the applicant with assistance in completing the forms, if necessary, and
  - c. Collect all completed forms.
4. Provide the FFH applicant with the following in electronic format unless the applicant requests a printed version:
  - a. Foster Parent Bill of Rights,
  - b. Statutes outlining the rights of foster parents,
  - c. DCS Policy, and
  - d. Grievance filing process including contact information and instructions outlined in policy 8.46 Resource Parent Complaint Resolution Process.

5. Provide a copy of the Resource Parent Role Acknowledgement form, obtain the applicant's signature on the form, and upload the original signed signature page to the case management system;
6. Discuss the family's Child Care Plan, identifying whether any background checks are needed for childcare providers (see policy 13.13 Childcare Providers and Extracurricular Activities);
7. Conduct an assessment of the physical environment of the home and document findings on the Resource Family Home Physical Environment Checklist;
8. Discuss any concerns about the physical environment of the home with the FFH applicant and how the concerns may impact the applicant's ability to complete licensure;
9. Verify the identity of all household members (HHMs) (see policy 2.09 Verifying Identity);
10. Verify marriage and divorce status of the FFH applicant, if applicable;
11. Ensure appropriate background checks have been completed for all HHMs (see policy 13.09 Conducting Background Checks for Foster Home Licensing);
12. Gather information required for any necessary exceptions, waivers, or variances (see policies 12.12 Foster Family Home Capacity, 12.19 Waivers, and 12.20 Variances); and
13. Document and upload documentation into the case management system.

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## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Licensing Worker

The licensing worker refers to the DCS Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) or the LCPA worker.

### Forms and Tools

- [Child Care Plan \(SF 54608\)](#)
- [DCS Policy Website](#)
- [Foster Parent Bill of Rights](#)
- [Initial Licensure Checklist for Foster Family Homes \(SF 53153\)](#)
- [Resource Family Home Physical Environment Checklist \(SF 53186\)](#)
- [Resource Parent Role Acknowledgement \(SF 54642\)](#)
- Statutes outlining the rights of foster parents.

### Related Policies

- [2.09 Verifying Identity](#)
- [8.46 Resource Parent Complaint Resolution Process](#)
- [12.03 Initial Licensure Documentation](#)
- [12.12 Foster Family Home Capacity](#)
- [12.19 Waivers](#)
- [12.20 Variances](#)
- [13.09 Conducting Background Checks for Foster Home Licensing](#)
- [13.13 Childcare Providers and Extracurricular Activities](#)

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## LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-27-4-4: Consultation with fire prevention and building safety commission](#)
- [IC 31-27-4-10: Investigation of applicants](#)
- [IC 31-27-4-16: Duration of license; limitations; renewal](#)

- [IC 31-27-4-18: Inspection of foster family homes](#)
- [IC 31-27-4-19: Records of monitoring activities and inspections](#)
- [IC 31-27-4-20: Cooperation by licensees](#)
- [IC 31-27-4.5: Foster Parent Rights](#)

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 12.07

*Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.*

### **Assessing the Physical Environment of the Home**

When conducting the assessment of the home's physical environment, photos should be taken to document compliance with requirements or to add support to any applicable exception, waiver, or variance.

### **Discussing Family Member Feelings About Fostering**

Becoming an FFH is a very significant change in anyone's life, even more so for the children within the family. During initial licensure, the licensing worker should talk to the FFH household members about the idea of a foster child coming to stay and evaluate the expectations and how they may adapt. The FFH should have on-going conversations with all family members to discuss and address any concerns.

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