STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
P.O. Box 45600 • Olympia, Washington 98504

January 12, 2026

HCLA: AFH #2026-001
CLARIFYING BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS IN ADULT FAMILY HOME SETTINGS

Dear Adult Family Home Provider:

This Dear Provider Letter supersedes DPL HCLA: AFH #2025-045.

The department has received several questions regarding *who* and *what type* of background checks are required in Adult Family Homes (AFH). The previously issued Dear Provider Letter HCLA: AFH 2025-045, included information that was confusing. This letter clarifies and reiterates the current background check requirements for AFH staff, including owners, operators and licensees of the facility. *The process and requirements have not changed*.

AFH Staff Background Requirements

- Background checks requirements for AFHs are located in chapter 388-76 WAC, under **WACs 388-76-10160 through 388-76-10181**.

- DSHS requires background checks, including those on health care and long-term care personnel, to be conducted by the department's Background Check Central Unit (BCCU) using the DSHS background authorization form.

- Who *must* have a Washington state name and date of birth (WNDOB) background check (WAC 388-76-101631):
  - AFH applicant and anyone affiliated with an applicant;
  - All AFH caregivers, entity representatives, resident managers (employed directly or by contract after January 7, 2012); and
  - All AFH household members over the age of 11 (12 years old and older), volunteers, students and non-caregiving staff who may have unsupervised access to residents.

- Who *must* have a national fingerprint background check (WAC 388-76-101632):
  - The AFH applicant and anyone affiliated with an applicant must have a national fingerprint-based background check through BCCU.
  - The AFH must ensure there is a valid national fingerprint based background check through BCCU for all caregivers, entity representatives and resident managers who are employed directly or by contract after January 7, 2012.
  - The AFH may *choose* to have all individuals associated with the AFH to have WNDOB and national fingerprint checks.
  - The AFH provider may accept from the individual who has completed a national fingerprint-based background check a copy of the results letter and any additional information from BCCU as long as the individual completed the national fingerprint-based background check after January 7, 2012.

- WNDOB background checks are valid for 2 years from the initial date they are conducted. They must be renewed *prior* to the expiration date.

- National fingerprint checks conducted after January 7, 2012, are valid for an indefinite period of time.

- For **provisional hires**, refer to WAC 388-76-10176.
    - The requirements state that the facility may provisionally employ individuals (hired after January 7, 2012) for 120 days and allow the individual to have unsupervised access to residents when:
        - The individual is not disqualified based on the results of the WNDOB background check; and
        - The results of the national fingerprint background check are pending. **Pending* means: A fingerprint appointment has been scheduled (per WAC 388-113-0109)

- **Please Note:** The statement made in the previous letter, "*Individuals who have not resided in Washington for three consecutive or continuous years or for those who reside outside of the state but work in Washington are required to undergo national fingerprint-based background checks*", is **NOT** a requirement for AFHs.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety.

If you have any questions, please contact RCS Policy at RCSpolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *"Partnering with People"*

Attachments:
RCWs 43.43.830 through 43.43.842
WACs 388-76-10160 through 388-76-10181
WACs 388-06-0700 and 388-06-0710