

“WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW”

...BEFORE BECOMING A LICENSED ADULT FAMILY HOME PROVIDER

This document contains information intended to help you decide if you want to become a licensed adult family home provider.

PROSPECTIVE PROVIDER INFORMATION

As an adult family home provider, you care for the most vulnerable members of our society, including persons with challenging behaviors, physical and developmental disabilities, mental illness, and the elderly. If you become licensed, you assume a serious responsibility that will have a large impact on you and your family members' lives.

Adult family homes are heavily regulated. If you become licensed, you will have to meet all of the many licensing requirements. You will have to provide the care and services your residents need day and night and will be responsible to ensure your residents' safety at all times.

Being an adult family home provider can be a rewarding experience, but it is also tiring and stressful work. You must be available to residents day and night, and you may decide you need to hire staff to be awake and available to care for residents at all times.

A number of providers close their adult family homes after only one or two years. This is usually because they did not realize how difficult it would be to share their home with others, how hard the work would be, or how hard it may be to attract residents and operate a business. When a home closes, this negatively impacts residents and their families, as well as providers and their families.

Before you decide to apply to become an adult family home provider, consider why you want to become a licensed provider and how you will maintain your adult family home business over time. The self-assessment at the end of this guide, along with the other information, may help you decide whether you want to go forward with the process.

AFH DEFINITION

WHAT IS AN ADULT FAMILY HOME (AFH)?

- An AFH is a residential home licensed to care for two to six adults not related by blood or marriage to the person or persons providing the services. Since June 2020, AFHs that have been licensed for two years may apply to increase their capacity to eight residents if they meet certain [criteria](#).
- The AFH provides room and meals, laundry, supervision, assistance with activities of daily living and personal care. Some homes provide nursing or other special care.
- A licensed AFH is at a residential home address.
- An adult family home is a single-family residence, a duplex unit, or other type of dwelling for one or two families [International Residential Code #R101]. An adult family home may be a duplex, but each unit must have:
 - Separate staffing;
 - Separate call systems;
 - Separate living quarters;
 - Separate addresses;
 - Either a fire wall or floor separating the two units; and
 - No internal door in common.

WHAT IS NOT AN ADULT FAMILY HOME (AFH)?

A home must be considered a “single family dwelling” to be licensed as an AFH. The setting must not be for more than two families.

LICENSE NEEDED

WHEN IS A LICENSE REQUIRED?

You must have an AFH license before you can provide personal care, special care, room, and meals for two to six adults, unrelated to you by blood, adoption or marriage, in your home.

WHEN IS A LICENSE NOT REQUIRED?

An AFH license is not required:

- To provide care for your own relatives related by blood, adoption, or marriage in your home;
- To provide care for one person – unrelated to you – in your home;
- To take care of relatives (such as your mother) and one other person not related to you in your home;
or
- If you are providing only room and meals in exchange for rent.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT ARE SOME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR OPERATING AN ADULT FAMILY HOME?

The following is a partial list of some things the provider must do:

- Know and comply with all AFH applicable laws, rules and local codes and ordinances;
- Maintain and implement written policies and procedures as required in Chapter 388-76 WAC.
- Maintain general and professional liability insurance for your adult family home. We recommend exploring this prior to licensure, as securing liability insurance can be challenging.
- Meet the assessed care needs and preferences for each resident which may include, but is not limited to:
 - Assisting with personal hygiene, dressing, bathing, toileting, body care, walking and moving from one spot to another,
 - Providing nutritious meals,
 - Offering activities other than television,
 - Providing medication assistance or administration, and
 - Providing supervision to residents with challenging behaviors, or who may be at risk of falls or choking;
- Be responsible for the care and services provided to residents 24 hours a day whether the provider is on site or not;
- Screen and hire responsible, dependable, and qualified staff members;
- Ensure staffing is adequate to meet all resident needs at all times (24 hours a day, seven days a week);
- Provide staff orientation and ongoing staff support and training;

- Maintain adult family home records such as individual resident records, staffing records, accounting, income tax and payroll records; and
- Protect each resident from abandonment, verbal, sexual, physical, and mental abuse, exploitation and financial exploitation, neglect, and involuntary seclusion.

SKILLS NEEDED

WHAT ARE THE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR OPERATING AN ADULT FAMILY HOME?

The provider must:

- Have the character, competence, and suitability to operate an AFH;
- Have the ability to read, understand and meet all laws and rules related to AFHs;
- Protect resident rights first over the needs of yourself and your family; and
- Be able to communicate in the English language and ensure that there is staff on-site at all times who are capable of understanding and speaking English well enough to be able to respond appropriately in case of an emergency and implement resident care plans.

COSTS

WHAT ARE THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH OBTAINING AN ADULT FAMILY HOME LICENSE?

A \$2,750 license and processing fee must be turned in with the license application. The fee for change of ownership is \$700. The following costs vary by instructor, county, location, fees, and codes, and are subject to change.

- 54-hour AFH Administrator [training](#) (\$649) at a contracted community college;
- First Aid and CPR training for applicants and all staff;
- 75 hours of basic/long-term care worker training;
- [Home Care Aide](#) Certification testing and certification by Department of Health (unless [exempt](#));
- Specialty training, if you plan to take residents with dementia, developmental disabilities, or mental illness;
- Building inspection by local building inspectors;

- Structural changes to your home that may be needed to meet state or local building codes or safety issues;
- Septic system upgrades if required by your local health authority, and
- Liability insurance costs.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS I MUST MEET TO BE LICENSED AS AN ADULT FAMILY HOME PROVIDER?

RCS launched a web based AFH application in September 2023. The AFH application and supporting documents must be complete for the application to be accepted. Access the Business Analysis and Applications Unit [webpage](#) for information about application requirements. Some of the requirements include:

- Meet the minimum education requirements that include a High School Diploma or GED, or any English-translated government document listed in WAC 388-76-10130;
- \$2,750 fee must be turned in with the license application (\$700 for change of ownership application);
- For a change of ownership the currently licensed AFH must submit DSHS form [10-412](#), prepared by the current licensee, stating that they are willing to give up their license when and if your license is approved;
- Copy of your AFH Administrator training certificate;
- Copy of Washington State Business License Number showing the Unified Business Identifier (UBI);
- Copy of document issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) verifying the Employer Identification Number (EIN) (Federal Tax ID Number);
- Copies of documents showing that the applicant provider, entity representative, and resident manager meet the minimum qualifications for licensure including educational requirements, CPR certificate, first-aid card, and long-term care worker training and Home Care Aide Certificate;
- Completed Caregiving Experience Attestation Form verifying you successfully completed 1000 hours of direct caregiving experience to a non-family member in the previous 60 months. This experience must be obtained after the age of 18 and is only applicable if care was to vulnerable adults in a licensed or contracted setting. Examples of this include but are not limited to working in a long-term care facility

or being paid by DSHS to care for an individual in their own home. Some [licensed professionals](#), such as registered nurses and physicians, are exempt from the 1000-hour requirement.

- Copies of specialty training documents if you intend to care for residents with dementia, developmental disabilities, or mental illness;
- Copies of the completed online Background Check Authorization [Form](#) for all providers, resident managers, and all people living in the household at time of application that are eleven years of age or older and others who will have unsupervised access to your residents.
- Copy of the completed AFH Building Inspection indicating “passed” with the adult family home floor plan (not required for change of ownership applications);
- Attestation that your Notice of Rights and Services Agreement for private pay and Medicaid-eligible residents meets requirements of RCW 70.129.030 and WAC 388-76-10530;
- Attestation that your policies for resident medication disposal, abuse and neglect reporting, respiratory protection program, and contacting emergency services meet WAC requirements;
- Copy of your disaster plan; including the applicant’s or entity representative’s name and the name of the proposed adult family home;
- Copy of your nurse delegation certificate if you plan to perform delegated nursing tasks;
- Be 21 years of age or older and be able to understand and speak English.

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

- Have a United States high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate or:
- Successful completion of government-approved public or private school education in a foreign country that includes an annual average of one thousand hours of instruction over twelve years or no less than twelve thousand hours of instruction (this is equivalent to grades 1-12 in the United States);
- Graduation from a foreign college, foreign university, or United States community college with a two-year diploma;
- Admission to, or completion of coursework at a foreign or United States university or college for which credit was granted;
- Graduation from a foreign or United States college or university, including award of a bachelor’s degree;
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- Admission to, or completion of postgraduate coursework at, a United States college or university for which credits were awarded; or
- Successful passage of the United States board examination for registered nursing, or any professional medical occupation for which college or university preparation was required. This does not include a certified nursing assistant (CNA).

IF I DO NOT MEET THE MINIMUM EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS, ARE THERE OTHER ALTERNATIVES?

See [WAC 388-76-10130](#) . There are no exceptions to these requirements.

WILL FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS NEED TO BE TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH?

Yes, foreign language educational documents submitted with the AFH application must be translated into English by an approved language translation service that certifies the translation as correct.

WRITTEN VERIFICATION

WHAT IS AN ATTESTATION?

An attestation is a legal and formal written statement. If you sign an attestation related to an application, you are saying and confirming that what you are signing is true.

CAREGIVING ATTESTATION

WHO CAN PROVIDE THE 1000 HOUR CAREGIVING NOTARIZED ATTESTATION OR VERIFICATION FOR YOU?

Only the following people may provide attestation or verification for you if they have observed you providing direct care:

- Supervisor;
- Employer;
- Co-worker;
- Client or resident if they are able to read, understand and sign the form in the presence of a notary, and be interviewed by telephone; or
- The resident's spouse or family member.

WHO CANNOT PROVIDE THE 1000 HOUR CAREGIVING ATTESTATION FOR YOU?

A Home and Community Services case manager or a Developmental Disabilities Administration case manager cannot provide an attestation for you.

WHAT IS INCLUDED AND VERIFIED AS TRUE IN THE NOTARIZED "ATTESTATION" OF CAREGIVING EXPERIENCE?

- The proposed licensee, entity representative, or resident manager has successfully provided 1000 hours of direct care and has caregiving experience.
- The dates of employment and any volunteer work experience as a long-term care worker that occurred after age 18 in a licensed or contracted setting.
- The individual verifies that work experience has occurred in the previous 60 months.
- The individual verifies that they were in a position to personally observe, over time, the applicant's actual caregiving.
- The accurate address and telephone contact information for the individual completing the form so the attester can be interviewed by the department about the applicant's caregiving experience, if needed.

BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STANDARDS MY HOME MUST MEET WHEN THE LICENSOR MAKES THE INITIAL INSPECTION VISIT?

See the AFH Initial Inspection Preparation [Checklist](#) for the FULL LIST of inspection requirements for your home.

Some of these requirements are included below. The home must:

- Meet current building code requirements for a single-family dwelling.
- Be clean, sanitary, free of hazards, and safe for residents both inside and out;
- Have secure handrails at all stairs or step/s in and out of the home;
- Have the required approved minimum 2A:10B-C rated fire extinguishers on each floor of the home;
- Have working smoke detectors on each floor, in hallways, in each resident bedroom, and in close proximity to the provider/staff bedroom;
- Have windows that open easily and have intact screens on windows that can be easily removed in an emergency;
- Have first aid supplies with a first aid manual;
- Have emergency water and food supplies for a minimum of three days;

- Have all firearms stored in secure/locked storage areas;
- Have a place to lock up medications;
- Have cleaning supplies and other toxic substances out of the reach of residents;
- Have water, well water and private septic systems that are adequate in size and approved (when applicable);
- Have a written and workable disaster plan; and
- Have record keeping processes developed that meet WAC 388-76-10315 requirements.

Bedroom requirements:

- There must be no more than two residents per room;
- A single room must have a minimum of 80 square feet of usable floor space, not including closet space and door swings;
- A double room must have a minimum of 120 square feet of usable floor space, not including closet space and door swings;
- Doors, including in the bedroom closet, must be openable from the inside and outside;
- There must be enough lighting in the room for residents to do what they want and for staff to do what they need; and
- There must be enough storage space in each bedroom to meet the needs of the residents.

Bathroom requirements:

- Residents must be able to get to toilets and bath/shower facilities easily;
- There must be one toilet for every five people in the house;
- The tub and shower must have grab bars and non-skid surfaces;
- The hot water temperature at fixtures accessible to residents must not exceed 120 degrees F, or be below 105 degrees F.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR POTENTIAL ADULT FAMILY HOME PROVIDERS

The following assessment was developed with an experienced group of adult family home providers. The intent of the assessment to give you as clear a picture as possible of the considerable demands of running an adult family home.

ANSWER YES, NO, OR SOMETIMES, TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RESPONSE TO EACH STATEMENT.

1. I am patient with other people's mistakes.
2. I can be alert and calm and awake in the middle of the night, even after a long day.
3. I can take verbal abuse and still forgive. I do not hold a grudge.
4. I am comfortable asking others for help.
5. I can place the needs of others ahead of my own wants.
6. I am comfortable taking care of residents of the opposite and same sex.
7. I have experience and am comfortable taking care of people who are elderly, who have mental illness or developmental disabilities who are not related to me.
8. I deal with emergencies without panic.
9. When planning schedules, I can be thoughtful of the needs of staff, residents, and residents' families.
10. I am aware and prepared to give up most of my privacy because I will be sharing my home with residents.
11. Confrontation with staff and resident's families does not intimidate me.
12. I follow established procedures and do not cut corners.
13. I can keep abreast of the regulations and laws that govern adult family homes.
14. I am tolerant of other cultures and points of view.
15. I respect other's rights, privileges, and privacy and strive never to control or manipulate others.
16. I save money for a crisis and routinely plan ahead.
17. The financial risks of owning a business or incurring debt do not frighten me.
18. I promptly pay my bills.
19. I speak English clearly and am easily understood.
20. I am in excellent health and have a lot of energy.
21. I am organized and efficient.
22. I can follow the instructions of doctors and nurses who give me care directions for residents in my home.
23. I can cope well when cherished residents may pass on. I am able to comfort the dying and relatives of those who are dying.
24. I am prepared financially and emotionally for the length of time it may take to get licensed.

Transforming Lives

25. I can take and act on constructive criticism regarding areas of my work needing improvement.

If you answered “yes” to 18 or more of 25 questions, you may understand the nature of the adult family home business. Before making the decision to become licensed as an adult family home, talk to other adult family home providers and ask to spend time in their homes. Ask a lot of questions before committing to opening your own adult family home.

MORE INFORMATION

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT REQUIREMENTS TO OPERATE A LICENSED ADULT FAMILY HOME, VISIT THE WEBSITE: [AFH Prospective Providers Page](#)