

THE FAMILY HOME STUDY IS TO BE WRITTEN IN A NARRATIVE FORMAT.

This guide is intended to assist social workers during the assessment of families applying to provide relative, foster and/or adoption or suitable person when completing Family Home Study. You will need to use your best judgment, and ask questions that are pertinent to the family situation. **NOT ALL QUESTIONS WILL NEED TO BE ASKED.** The items marked with a • must be described in your narrative. The items marked with an ? are potential questions that can be asked to elicit more information from the applicants. This home study may be used to assist in the matching of families with children in need of out of home care.

All applicants applying to provide care for a child in out of home care must have the following completed prior to completion of the home study process:

Criminal history background check completed through BCCU
Finger Print check
CAMIS check
Child abuse and neglect check in other states where an applicant has resided in the previous five years if applicable.

Court Approved Placement with persons known to the child or family (not licensed)

The court may approve placement of a child in out of home care with persons who are known to the child or family but who do not meet the definition of relative. These persons may choose to not pursue foster care licensing but continue placement of the child.

Relative Caregivers/Other Suitable Persons

For all relative caregivers, the following documents must be completed within the first 72 hours of placement:

- Relative Caregiver Placement Checklist & Intake form (DSHS 15-280)
- Placement Agreement (DSHS 15-281)

Relative caregivers/other suitable persons will have Family Home Study completed within 120 days of the placement. The information will be kept on the relative home study document and will be utilized for the remainder of the relative home study process.

Relative caregivers that have been identified as a prospective placement and do not have a child placed will have the Family Home Study completed within 90 days

Initial License

An initial license will be completed on families that do not meet the requirement of RCW 74.15.020(2) a. These families must complete the entire Foster Care Licensing process in order to continue to be a placement resource for a child in out of home care. The purpose of the initial license is to allow placements with families whom the child has an existing relationship and is someone with whom the child feels comfortable prior to becoming fully licensed for foster care.

In order to complete the initial license all questions in **Arial Black** (font) in the family home study must be completed. During the remaining foster care licensing process, the remainder of the family home study must be completed. The initial license must be completed within 72 hours but no longer than 5 calendar days from receiving the referral. Information that must be completed prior to issuing an initial foster home license includes an interview of the applicant(s), verification that the criminal background check, finger print check, CAMIS check, and a child abuse and neglect check in other states (when applicable) have been completed, and verification that the applicant has signed up for the next available pre-service training and written or verbal reference checks from at least one reference.

Foster Care

Home Studies for foster families are to be completed within 90 days from receipt of the application for a license. In addition to the home study, licensors must include the following documents: Foster Home Licensing checklist (DSHS 10-183), Foster Home Licensing File Checklist (DSHS 10-182), Policy Statement (DSHS 10-290), Evacuation Floor Plan, Medical Policy Statement, 3 reference letters (DSHS 16-179 & 15-286), Personal Information forms (DSHS 15-276) for each applicant, and Criminal Background clearances for each person over 15 years of age residing in the household.

Adoption

For adoption, the Family Home Study must also include documentation of financial resources (DSHS 14-452), health recommendation from medical provider (DSHS 13-001), 4 references (DSHS 16-179 & 15-286), and verification of current marriage and all divorces (DSHS 9-979). In addition, all Family Home Studies for adoption shall include the Statement of Qualifications, Verification of Issues Discussed.

In accordance with RCW 26.33.190 (6) - *A copy of the completed pre-placement report shall be delivered to the person requesting the report.*

The original home study will be filed with the superior court selected by the applicant, in accordance with RCW 26.33.190 (5) or in accordance with local court procedures. *“The person requesting the report shall designate to the agency, the department, the court approved individual, or the court in writing the county in which the pre-placement report is to be filed. If the person requesting the report has not filed a petition for adoption, the report shall be indexed in the name of the person requesting the report and a cause number shall be assigned. A fee shall not be charged for filing the report. The applicable filing fee may be charged at the time a petition governed by this chapter is filed. Any subsequent pre-placement reports shall be filed together with the original report.”*

The Family Home Study will be submitted with a cover letter that states:

Enclosed for filing, pursuant to RCW 26.33.190(5), is a pre-placement report for *****ADOPTIVE PARENTS*****. I also am enclosing two photocopies of the report and would appreciate your returning conformed copies to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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The item marked with a ● must be described in the narrative.

The items marked with an ? are potential questions that can be asked to elicit more information.

Not all families have the knowledge and skills to meet the special needs of children placed in out of home care. You must explain the process and what they can expect during the face-to-face meetings. You may also need to assist relatives in completing the required forms. Relatives participating in this home study must complete the Personal Information form. This will provide some background on the applicants and will identify topics that will need further exploration. Failure on the part of the relative to complete the form is not a reason to stop or deny the home study. If the family does not complete the background form, the information should be gathered through an interview.

When writing your home study, document strengths as well as concerns that could potentially jeopardize a child's placement. Refer to and incorporate information from supporting documents and observations into your narrative, such as: a summary of your investigation into law enforcement records, conviction records, pending charges, CAMIS referral history, CA/N checks in other states (when applicable), registered sex offender lists and collateral references. Summarize all pertinent information from other documents. Do not state in the home study narrative to see other forms.

Unless otherwise specified the Family Home Study is to be completed within 90 days of receipt of the application.

FAMILY HOME STUDY GUIDELINES

Family Name:

Address:

Telephone Numbers (daytime and evening):

Dates of Interviews: At least one interview **must** be in the family home. For adoption there must be a minimum of 4 contacts with the applicant/s.

REASON FOR APPLYING:

- Describe what the applicant is applying for (relative, foster care, and/or adoption or suitable person) and how the family became interested. Why did they decide to pursue placement for a child in out of home care.
- If a child is already in the home, name the child and relationship of child to applicant.
- ? When was the child placed in the home, and under what circumstances?

A. **BACKGROUND OF APPLICANT** (complete for each applicant)

This section will help determine the strengths of the applicants in their current relationships, in addition to providing some background information on how the applicants view their childhood.

FAMILY FACTS:

- Name, date and place of birth of each applicant.
- Briefly describe the applicant's childhood through early adulthood. (This includes family activities, composition, family strengths and limitations, significant life events).
- Describe the relationship of the applicant's parents while the applicant was growing up. What were their parents' occupations and roles in the home?
- Did someone other than his/her parents raise the applicant?
- Describe the applicant's current relationship with his or her parents.
- Describe the applicant's relationship with their siblings while growing up. What is their current relationship?
- Describe the applicant's values and goals.
- ? At what age did the applicant leave home and what were the circumstances?
- ? Has anyone in the applicant's family ever adopted or fostered a child?

EDUCATION:

- Describe where the applicant attended school/training (names), dates attended. When did applicant graduate; identify certificates/degrees earned.
- ? How does the applicant describe their educational experience?

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY, OCCUPATION, and WORK SCHEDULE:

- Describe applicant's employment history.
- Describe the applicant's current occupation and work schedule.
- Was applicant in the military? What branch of service? What type of discharge?

CULTURE

- Describe the applicant's cultural background. A person's cultural background includes such things as family traditions, customs, religion, ethnicity and lifestyle.
- Describe how the applicant will help a child preserve and appreciate their heritage.
- ? If the applicant has identified American Indian heritage is s/he enrolled/eligible for membership into a Tribe? Please name the Tribe. If applicant discloses Native American ancestry use DSHS form 15-128 for verification of Indian Status per WAC 388-70-093.
- ? What languages does applicant speak in addition to English?

B. RELATIONSHIPS

SPOUSE/PARTNER:

- Describe each applicant's significant relationships/marital history.
- Give dates of marriage(s) and divorce(s). If divorced, describe circumstances of the divorce(s). (For adoptive home study, copies of current marriage certificate and all divorce decrees need to be in the file.)
- If not currently in a marriage/partner relationship, is the applicant involved in any relationship that might affect a child?

- Describe how each applicant makes decisions and resolves differences.
- ? If applicable, describe the applicant's present relationship with ex-partners.
- ? How would the applicant feel, and what would s/he do, if the child becomes a disruptive influence on his/her marriage/relationship?
- ? Has the applicant ever been separated from his/her present partner? What were the reasons and how were they resolved?
- ? If applicable, describe any infertility issues and how they have affected the applicant's relationship?

CHILDREN:

- *Describe all the children in the home including name, ages, grade level, academic performance, special needs, personality, likes/dislikes, health, responsibilities in the home and school adjustment.*
- Describe any adult child/ren in or out of the home including where they reside and their current relationship with the applicant.
- *Describe any behaviors of the child/ren in the home that may affect a child placed in that home.*
- If the applicant/s has/have minor children who are not living with them, please explain why. What is the applicant/s on-going contact with these children?
- Have any of the applicant/s children been involved with the juvenile court system?
- How do the applicant/s children (including adult children) feel about having additional children brought into the home?
- Has the applicant ever experienced the death of a child? If so, what were the circumstances?

OTHERS:

- *Identify any other persons living in the home or on the property.*
- *Will they be involved in the parenting, care taking and/or supervision of the child?*
- *Will they have any responsibility for transporting children? (If so, we need to verify that they have a valid driver's license and insurance)*

C. PARENTING AND EXPERIENCE WITH CHILDREN

Discipline:

- Describe how each applicant was disciplined as a child. Describe each applicant's current practices and beliefs.
- *If the applicant's discipline method with his/her children differs from the department's policies, what effect could that have in the family? Will the applicant/s comply with the department's discipline policy?*

Experience and Training:

- *Describe each applicant's experiences with children other than his/her own.*
- *Has the applicant/s had any special training or parenting classes? Has the applicant had any special training to care for medically fragile children?*
- Will the applicant/s be willing to use counseling or training?
- ? Does the applicant/s have a basic understanding of normal child development?
- ? If you observe the applicant/s and a child interacting, is the applicant/s sensitive and appropriately responsive to the child's needs and/or signals?

Attitudes on Parenting:

- *What does the applicant/s believe will be the challenges faced with parenting a child in out of home care?*
- What are the applicant's attitudes toward people with a different sexual orientation from their own?
- How did the applicant's parents influence their parenting styles, beliefs and values?
- How will the applicants support a child's educational program?
- ? How will the applicant/s share parenting responsibilities?
- ? Describe how the applicant's parenting skills and philosophy may have changed over the years.
- ? What is the applicant's philosophy on allowance?

Family Roles/Activities:

- What does the applicant's family do for fun?
- How do children share in household responsibilities?

D. RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL AFFILIATION AND PRACTICES

- Describe the applicant/s religious/spiritual preferences and practices. What is the applicant's level of involvement in his/her place of worship?
- What is each of the applicant's expectations about the practice of religion/spirituality for children placed in his/her home?
- What will the applicant/s do if a child does not wish to participate in the family's religious/spiritual practices? How would the applicant/s support the child's religious/spiritual practices?
- Will any of the applicant's religious practices affect his/her ability to comply with departmental policies? (I.e. Use of discipline, allowing access to medical care, etc).
- If applicable, would the applicant allow a child to celebrate a holiday that the applicant/s may not celebrate?

E. MEDICAL/PSYCHOSOCIAL

General Medical: (For adoptions, include a summary of the medical report.)

- *Describe each applicant's general physical condition. Include a summary of other medical evaluations that may have been obtained.*
- Will the applicant's general health affect his/her ability to care for a child?
- Describe any current medications that the applicant is taking and why. Are there any side effects that may affect the applicant's care of a child?

Abuse History:

- *Describe any family history (for both immediate and extended family) of abuse (either as the victim or perpetrator) and how the family dealt with the abuse. Did the victim and/or offender get help? If applicable, has the family dealt with the issues sufficiently to insure that those issues will not interfere with parenting a child?*
- *Has the applicant or any family member ever been involved with CPS?*
- *If there is a known offender in the family, is there continued contact? If so, what is the safety/supervision plan?*

Domestic Violence Issues:

- *Describe any history of domestic violence within the immediate family.*
- *Has anyone in the applicant's immediate family had a restraining, anti-harassment or protective order filed against him or her, or on his/her behalf? If not, how has the applicant resolved the situation?*
- *Is there any domestic violence issues within the extended family that could pose a threat to a child placed in the home?*

Drug/Alcohol Issues:

- *Describe the applicant's current alcohol, tobacco or illegal drug use.*
- *Are there any members of the applicant's family that have a current problem with, or history of, drug/alcohol abuse? If they do not live in the household, what kind of contact might these people have with a child placed in the applicant's home?*
- *Have the applicant/s and/or family members received drug/alcohol treatment? Please describe when, where and the outcome.*
- *How have drug/alcohol issues affected the applicant's life?*

Mental Health/Counseling:

- *Describe any history of mental health issues within the immediate family. (Include a summary of psychological evaluations.)*

- Is there any mental health issue within the extended family that could pose a threat to a child placed in the applicant's home?
- ? Has the applicant/s, or any person in their immediate family, seen a counselor, therapist, clergy or mental health professional? When, where and outcome?

F. HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD

- *Describe the home environment. (For example, is it chaotic, peaceful, busy, organized, warm and welcoming, etc?) Include a description of the home, including the number of rooms, the sleeping arrangements, and the housekeeping standards.*
- Describe the neighborhood. Is the home in a rural, urban or other setting?
- Describe the community resources available, including medical, counseling, educational services.
- Describe the cultural diversity of the community. How does the applicant think a child of a different race would be treated within the community?
- Are there appropriate areas for children to play, and toys that encourage growth and development? Describe indoor and outdoor play areas.
- *Describe the property including any out buildings, and tell how they are used (check the inside of outbuildings)*
- *Are there safety issues in the home, or surrounding neighborhood, that would affect children? Are there any hazards? For example a wood stove, electric fences, pools, water? What is the safety plan?*
- *Are there weapons in the home? If so, how and where are they stored?*
- *Describe all pets. How do they interact with children?*
- ? Does the applicant/s have any dietary preferences? (I.e. Vegetarian, Kosher, etc.)

G. SUPPORT SYSTEMS (For adoptions, include a summary of the financial form.)

- Describe the applicant/s support systems. Is the applicant's family a part of that support system?
- ? How will the applicant's extended family and close friends respond to the placement of a child/ren in their home that may have special needs and/or be of a different racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural background than his/her own?

H. FAMILY FINANCIAL

- Describe the applicant/s source of income and amount, financial stability, and how the applicant/s manages money.
- ? How will the addition of a child to the family affect the current financial situation?
- ? Does the applicant have the financial resources to support the family without reimbursement for foster care?

I. POTENTIAL FOR PERMANENCY

- If a child cannot return to the family of origin, would the applicant/s consider adoption or long-term care? (Yes or no is not a thorough answer.)
- How will the applicant(s) maintain the child's relationship with his/her birth family, and/or those with whom the child has a significant relationship?
- Describe the applicant(s) understanding of the connections between siblings that may not be placed together.
- Describe the applicant's willingness to maintain and support sibling connections through, sibling visits and contacts.
- Describe the applicant's willingness to enter into an open communication agreement with a sibling not placed in their home in the event the family adopts a youth that has siblings not placed together.
- Describe the applicant's plan for children should s/he be unable to continue caring for the child.

J. CHILD PREFERENCE AND COMPETENCY TO MEET THE CHILD'S NEED

This section needs to include an assessment of each applicant's ability to care for a special needs child.

- Describe the applicant's child preference (including: age, sex, ethnicity, language, health, special needs, development).
- Can the applicant(s) support reunification of a child with the family of origin even if they disagree with the case plan.
- Does the applicant have the skills and ability to parent a special needs child?
- How will the applicant(s) support, honor, and maintain connections with a child's cultural heritage?

- What type of child characteristics does the applicant believe s/he would have difficulty accepting or parenting? Include behaviors, social, emotional, physical and medical health of a child.

K. APPLICANTS WITH PRIOR RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD/REN (*Relative, kin caregiver, friend of family, foster parent, etc.*)

- Describe the applicant's relationship to the child.
- Describe how the placement of this child might affect the applicant's relationship with the birth parents and other family members.
- Do the caregivers believe the child should be placed in out of home care?
- Will the caregiver maintain neutrality regarding parents?
- Will the caregiver protect the child from parents and other relatives, if necessary?
- Describe how the caregiver will keep information provided by the department confidential from other family members.
- ? If this child has special needs, what are they and how will the applicant meet them?

L. ADOPTION – Per RCW 26.33.190 the following issues need to be discussed with all adoptive applicants. Documentation of the discussion and the applicant's response should be addressed in the Family Home study and documented in the family case notes.

1. Concept of adoption as a lifelong developmental process and commitment.

- Describe the applicant's understanding of the significance of adoption as a lifelong developmental process.
- How does the applicant feel about adoption as an alternative to biological parenting?
- Describe the applicant's willingness to participate in an open communication agreement.
- Does the applicant see him/herself being involved throughout the child's life? (School graduation, wedding, grandchildren, and sharing their inheritance.) Explain.

2. The potential for the child to have feelings of identity and confusion and loss regarding separation from the birth parents.

- Describe the applicant's understanding of a child's lifelong conflicting loyalty between birth and adoptive parents.
- Discuss the applicant's understanding of the importance of open communication about adoption issues throughout the life of the child.
- As the applicants discuss adoption, will s/he be able to put the child's emotional well being above any feelings that s/he may have about the birth parents?
- Discuss how the applicants feel about the continued use of the child's birth name (including the first name).

3. The relevance of the child's relationship with siblings and the potential benefit to the child of providing for a continuing relationship and contact between the child and known siblings.

- How will the applicant(s) maintain the child's relationship with his/her birth family, and/or those with whom the child has a significant relationship?
- Describe the applicant's understanding of the connections between siblings that may not be placed together.
- Describe the applicant's willingness to maintain and support sibling connections through, sibling visits and contacts.
- Describe the applicant's willingness to enter into an open communication agreement with a sibling not placed in their home in the event the family adopts a youth that has siblings not placed together.

4. Disclosure of the fact of adoption to the child.

- How does the applicant think s/he might discuss adoption with a child at different developmental stages, including how s/he would recognize natural opportunities?

5. The child's possible questions about birth parents and relatives.

- What will the applicant/s tell the child when they ask why they don't live with their family of origin?
- How will the applicant/s explain the child's past abuse/neglect issues?
- How will the applicants support the child's interest in searching?
- Will the applicants be able to give the child permission to love and maintain a relationship with his/her birth parents?

6. The relevance of the child's racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage.

- Describe how the applicant(s) will help a child preserve and appreciate his/her heritage.

- Describe how the applicant(s) will honor the child's past.
- How will the applicant(s) prepare, and support, a child against biases and prejudices that they may experience in the community and/or school?

M. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

References:

This section needs to provide a short description from the references. You should not use direct quotes from references, or include the name of the references. You may paraphrase a reference.

Criminal History & CA/N Check:

Criminal history background check completed through BCCU (all person 16 and over)

Finger Print check (all applicants)

CAMIS check

Child abuse and neglect check in other states where an applicant has resided in the previous five years if applicable.

- Describe the results of each check completed including identifying the source of information (for example, FBI, WSP, and local law enforcement) and who cleared it if there were any hits.

Additional Information:

There are a number of forms that accompany foster care and/or adoption that will need to be reviewed for the completion of the Family Home Study.

- List all documents that were used in completion of the home study

N. EVALUATION

Review the written Family Home Study and supporting documentation. Does it reflect relevant information relating to the fitness of the person to be a foster parent? Adoptive parent? Relative Caregiver? Do you need more background information to make a determination? If so, schedule additional interviews or collateral contacts.

- Summarize the significant findings made during the Home Study process. Identify strengths as well as issues of concern. Identify ways in which issues of concern will be addressed.

O. RECOMMENDATION

The following statement should be included in the written Family Home Study:

The recommendation of this Family Home Study is made based on the information provided at the time of the Family Home Study. Additional information not known to the social worker may change the recommendation. This Family Home Study is the property of the Children's Administration. It is for the placement of special needs children who are in the custody of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and is not be used without express written consent of DCFS.

Adoption Only

The Statement of Qualifications and Verification of Issues Discussed needs to be completed for adoptions only.