

RELATIVE/SIGNIFICANT OTHER FOSTER HOME APPROVAL

Policy no.: 4.3

Effective Date: March 2007

Date Revised: March 7, 2013; October 1, 2013; March 28, 2018

Policy Cross References: Regular Foster Home Approval Process

Legislative References: s.62(1) and s.62(2) Placement considerations; s.63(3) Agreement for service.

PURPOSE: To outline the process for completing the assessment and approval of a relative/significant other foster home.

POLICY:

1. The social worker shall first consider placement of a child or youth with family or a person with whom the child or youth has a significant relationship.
2. When determining where a child or youth should be placed, the social worker shall involve the child or youth, where age and developmentally appropriate, the family, and other support networks to determine if there is a family member, or individual significant to the child or youth, who could meet the child or youth's placement needs.
3. When a child or youth is able to be safely placed with a person(s) who is a relative/significant to them, the social worker may expedite the placement of the child or youth with a relative/significant other foster parent(s) by assessing that individual(s) using the preliminary approval process.

PROCEDURES:

Preliminary Approval Process

1. A social worker may assess a prospective relative/significant other foster parent(s) for a preliminary approval if a child or youth requires an immediate placement and this will prevent the child or youth from having to be placed in an unfamiliar environment. A preliminary assessment shall include:
 - a) a home visit and interview with all persons in the home to determine the appropriateness of the living arrangement and the ability of the potential foster parent(s) to meet the needs of the child or youth;
 - b) a *Child Protection Clearance Check* for the prospective foster parent(s) and any other person(s) residing in the home age 16 and older. This check shall include all areas of the province and all other jurisdictions in Canada where they have previously resided;
 - c) a provincial court check and a verbal criminal record check on the

prospective foster parent(s) from the local police jurisdiction that includes all areas of the province and any other jurisdictions where they previously resided;

- d) a verbal criminal record check on any other person(s) age 18 years old or older who resides in the home, from the local police jurisdiction that includes all areas of the province and any other jurisdictions where they previously resided;
 - e) two verbal references from non-relatives (the written reference should be obtained as soon as possible);
 - f) one verbal collateral reference (e.g. a school teacher if they have school age children of their own);
 - g) the wishes of the child or youth, including the relationship that exists between the child or youth and the prospective relative/significant other foster parent(s);
 - h) the relationship between the parents(s) of the child or youth and the relative/significant other being assessed; and
- i) *Foster Home Safety Checklist.*
2. The prospective relative/significant other foster parent(s) shall demonstrate to the social worker that they understand their role in supporting the child or youth and are able to work as part of a team to address and support the child or youth's physical, social, emotional, developmental and cultural needs. It is also important that they understand the expectations of the foster care program and are willing and able to work with the child or youth's birth family and support contact, unless it is deemed not to be in the best interests of the child or youth.
 3. The preliminary assessment, including the social workers recommendation, shall be documented on the *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other (Preliminary Approval)* form. The completed form, and supporting documentation as outlined in Procedure 1, shall be forwarded to the supervisor for review. The supervisor shall make the final decision regarding approval.
 4. Relative/significant other foster home placements shall not be approved if there are outstanding child protection concerns, or if a police or reference check indicates there is a history that may place the child or youth at risk.
 5. The foster home shall be granted preliminary approval prior to the placement of the child or youth in care.
 6. When a preliminary approval is granted, the relative/significant other foster parent(s) shall be notified verbally but also in writing in a timely manner. The approval letter should outline the duration of the preliminary approval as well as the remaining steps that have to be completed to obtain full approval.
 7. The social worker shall ensure that all approved foster parents are given copies of the departmental policies on ***Positive Discipline, Medical Consent, A Child or Youth Absent Without Permission and A Child or Youth Missing or Abducted.***

8. The social worker shall ensure the approved foster parent(s) signs a Declaration of Confidentiality and the *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 1)* or *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 2)*.
9. The social worker shall ensure that approved foster parents are given the contact information for the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association (NLFFA), the office of the Child and Youth and their local CSSD office, including after hour services.
10. The social worker shall forward the name(s) of the approved foster parent(s) to the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association (NLFFA) on the *NLFFA Registration* form. If there is more than one approved foster parent, both names are required on the *NLFFA Registration* form.
11. The social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) of the requirement of the foster parent(s) to notify the social worker immediately of any change in who is residing in the home, or if any person(s) will be visiting and staying in the home for a period of two months or longer, at which time a foster home review shall be required.
12. If a prospective foster parent(s) is not approved they shall be notified verbally when the decision is made followed, as soon as possible, by a written decision.

Final Approval

13. When a child or youth is placed with a preliminary approval and continues to reside in the foster home, the final approval process must be completed within **60 days**. This allows a social worker the time to complete a more thorough assessment of the relative/significant other foster home and to assess the ability of the foster parent(s) to meet the expectations of the foster care program.
14. Where a preliminary assessment has been already completed, the final assessment process shall include at minimum an interview with each prospective foster parent (both individually and together), a private, in person interview with the other persons residing in the home and with the child or youth in care where age and developmentally appropriate.
15. Where a preliminary assessment has not already been completed, the social worker shall, at minimum, complete two private, in person interviews with each prospective foster parent and two joint interviews where a couple is being assessed. The social worker shall also complete a private, in person interview with the other persons residing in the home as well as with the child or youth in care identified to be placed in the home.
16. The social worker shall document the final approval process using the *Foster Parent Assessment Relative/Significant Other (Final Approval)* form. This form provides a guide for social workers regarding the areas that shall be assessed to inform the final approval process.
17. The social worker shall also ensure the following documentation is obtained:
 - a) completed criminal records checks on all persons residing in the home age 12

years old and over, including the following:

- i. persons age 12 years and older must make application to the police jurisdiction where they currently reside and give permission to have a criminal records check completed in all jurisdictions where they previously resided;
 - ii. persons age 18 years and older must select to have the Vulnerable Sector Check on the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) Criminal Records Check form or complete a Request for a Vulnerable Sector Check form if residing in a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) jurisdiction. The Vulnerable Sector Check will identify if an individual has been pardoned for a sexual offence;
 - iii. persons residing in an RCMP jurisdiction are required to make an application to the provincial court to have a provincial court check completed prior to submitting the request for a criminal record check and/or Vulnerable Sector check to the RCMP. Applications are available at RCMP detachments or the Provincial Court; and
 - iv. persons residing in a RNC jurisdiction shall make application to the Provincial Court to have a check completed if it be possible that they have a record prior to 1980.
- b) A *Child Protection Clearance Check (CPCC)* for all persons residing in the home including checks from all areas of the province and all other jurisdictions where they had resided since birth. (If this has already been fully completed as part of the preliminary approval process it does not need to be repeated). If a social worker or applicant is unable to obtain a *CPCC* from another jurisdiction, despite documented efforts to do so (e.g., letter from a child welfare agency indicating they do not provide checks or if a foreign jurisdiction does not respond to a request), the applicant shall be requested to sign the *Affidavit* as outlined in the policy for the *Completion of Child Protection Clearance Checks* before a decision is made regarding the clearance check.
- c) two written references from non-relatives, and one collateral reference using the *Letter of Reference* forms. If the prospective foster parent(s) has school age children, the teacher is the preferred collateral reference.
- d) medicals on the prospective foster parent(s) using the *Physicians Report on the Prospective Foster Parent Applicant* form. All children or other adults living in the home shall obtain a medical letter from a physician outlining their general health and any significant findings or concerns. If concerns are documented by the physician, the social worker shall contact the physician directly to discuss how this may impact the ability of the applicant(s) to provide care to a child or youth placed in the home. In remote areas where a physician is unavailable the medical may be completed by a qualified Health Practitioner (e.g., Nurse Practitioner, Community Health Nurse). The social worker may approve the cost of medical reports to be completed for the applicant(s) and other person(s) residing in the home, to a maximum of \$100 per person. The supervisor may approve the cost of medical reports for the applicant(s) and other person(s) residing in the home that exceed \$100; and

e) *Foster Home Safety Checklist.*

18. If a criminal record check identifies a current criminal charge(s) or previous criminal conviction(s) for a child or youth, the social worker shall stamp the criminal record check documentation with the non-disclosure date. Please refer to the **Youth Corrections Records Management** policy for additional information.
19. The social worker may approve the cost for fingerprinting services for the prospective foster parent(s) or other person(s) residing in the home if required for a Vulnerable Sector Check, to a maximum of \$100 per person.
20. If, at any time throughout the final assessment process, concerns are noted regarding the prospective foster parent(s) that would impact the approval process, the concerns must be brought to the immediate attention of the clinical program supervisor and a decision shall be made regarding the continued assessment of the home. Where a child or youth has already been placed based on a preliminary approval, the child or youth's continued placement shall also be assessed.
21. Upon completion of the final assessment, the social worker shall submit the *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other Foster Home Assessment (Final Approval)* form and the supporting documentation to the clinical program supervisor with their recommendation regarding approval of the prospective foster parent(s).
22. The clinical program supervisor shall make the final decision regarding approval.
23. If the relative/significant other foster home is approved, the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) verbally and in writing of the approval.
24. Where the final assessment indicates that a child or youth should not remain in the placement, another placement shall be secured. The social worker shall meet with the foster parent(s) to discuss the reasons for not granting final approval. This decision should also be provided in writing in a timely manner following the meeting with the prospective foster parent(s).
25. Relative/significant other foster parents are not required to complete the *PRIDE* preservice program however, they can be offered the opportunity to attend.
26. The social worker will support and monitor a relative/significant other foster home, and address and document any issues that affect the care of the child or youth.
27. The social worker shall ensure the approved foster parent(s) signs a *Declaration of Confidentiality* and the *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 1)* or *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 2)*.
28. The social worker shall ensure that approved foster parents are given the contact information for the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association (NLFFA), the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and their local CSSD office, including after hour services.
29. The social worker shall forward the name(s) of the approved foster parent(s) to the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association (NLFFA) on the *NLFFA*

Registration form. If there is more than one approved foster parent, both names are required on the *NLFFA Registration* form.

30. The social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) of the requirement of the foster parent(s) to notify the social worker immediately of any change in who is residing in the home, or if any person(s) will be visiting and staying in the home for a period of 2 months or longer, at which time a foster home review shall be required.

Subsequent Approval

31. Where a foster home has received final approval as a relative significant other foster home for a specific child(ren) or youth and an additional placement of another child who they are connected to is being explored, a subsequent approval is required before the child or youth can be placed.
32. In exploring the placement of an additional child or youth, the social worker shall determine if the foster family has the physical space and the ability to care for an additional child or youth. This determination shall be made in consultation with other social workers who may be working with the foster family and/or the other children or youth in care residing in the home.
33. The social worker shall document the subsequent approval process using the *Foster Parent Assessment Relative/Significant Other (Subsequent Approval)* form. This form provides a guide for social workers regarding the areas that shall be assessed to inform the approval process.
34. The social worker shall have, at minimum, one interview with each foster parent, a joint interview if it is couple, a private, in person interview with other persons residing in the home (where age and developmentally appropriate) including other children or youth in care placed in the home. These interviews will inform the social workers clinical assessment of the foster parents' ability to care for an additional child or youth and how the placement may impact other children and youth already residing in the home.
35. If the foster home was approved (i.e. Final Approval) within one year of starting the subsequent assessment process, the social worker is not required to obtain new supporting documentation unless is deemed necessary by the social worker in consultation with the supervisor, to inform the assessment process (e.g. a medical is requested to determine the foster parents ability to care for an additional child or youth as they have a serious medical condition). If the approval date exceeds a year, the supporting documentation outlined on the *Foster Parent Assessment Relative/Significant Other (Subsequent Approval)* form must be obtained.
36. The social worker shall submit the *Foster Parent Assessment Relative/Significant Other (Subsequent Approval)* form including their recommendation and any required supporting documentation, to the clinical program supervisor for review.
37. The supervisor shall make the final decision regarding approval.
38. If the relative/significant other foster home is granted the subsequent approval, the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) in writing of the approval.

39. Where the subsequent approval is not granted, the social worker shall meet with the foster parent(s) to discuss the reasons for not granting approval. This decision should also be provided in writing in a timely manner of meeting with the foster parent(s).

EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY:

1. The supervisor may grant verbal approval of a relative/significant other foster parent without the assessment information that has been gathered being **documented** on the *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other (Preliminary Approval)* form if this will prevent the child or youth from having to be placed in an unfamiliar environment. The required form shall be completed **within 2 days**.
2. A supervisor may grant verbal approval of a relative/significant other foster home without the assessment information gathered being **documented** on the *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other (Subsequent Approval)* form if this will prevent the child or youth from having to be placed in an unfamiliar environment. The required form shall be completed **within 2 days**.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS:

- *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other (Preliminary Approval)* form
- *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other (Final Approval)* form
- *Foster Parent Assessment-Relative/Significant Other (Subsequent Approval)* form
- *Letter of Reference* form
- *Application for a Child Protection Clearance Check* form
- *Physicians Report on the Prospective Foster Parent Applicant* form
- *Declaration of Confidentiality* form
- *Foster Home Safety Checklist*
- *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 1)*
- *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 2)*