

LCCS POLICY 735
Assessment, Training and Homestudy Process for Foster Families

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See new Policy #:	

Scope:	All foster care caseworkers, foster care supervisors, foster parents and those applying to be foster parents.
Responsibility:	Placement Department Manager
Purpose:	To provide mandated assessment and training of foster homes to meet the needs of children in out-of-home care. To ensure that all applicants for foster care are treated equally.
Legal Cite:	O.R.C. §§ 5103.03, 5153.16; O.A.C. 5101:2-5-13, 5101:2-5-20, 5101:2-7-14, 5101:2-48-09.

POLICY STATEMENT

LCCS will provide pre-service and on-going training to prospective foster families.

No parent will be trained differently or be required to take additional training based on their race or the race of the child they may wish to foster.

LCCS will only require foster care applicants to participate in activities required by the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC).

PROCEDURE - including required timeframes and documentation

All of LCCS' assessment, training, and homestudy activities will be in compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, "Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978", and 42 U.S.C. 671(a), the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89.

Provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 supersede above listed acts.

PRE-SERVICE/ORIENTATION TRAINING

LCCS requires that an application be made in the full name of each adult member of a couple, a single person or each co-parent.

- Prospective family foster home parents (both members of a couple or both co-parents) are required to complete thirty-six (36) hours of pre-service/orientation training as required by the OAC and be named on the foster home license. In order to facilitate an applicant's participation in pre-service training, LCCS Placement Department staff will:
 - provide to applicants, within seven (7) business days of initial contact, an introductory letter and instructions for electronic access to:
 - a brief description of foster care and foster care orientation training, including the types of foster and adoptive homes needed;
 - the titles and dates of upcoming pre-service training classes;
 - foster care requirements and registration information;
 - LCCS Policy 735, *Assessment, Training & Homestudy Process for Foster Families*
 - LCCS Policy 750, *Foster and Adoptive Home Recruitment*
 - LCCS Policy 751, *Simultaneous Approval of Applicants for Adoption & Foster Care*
 - LCCS Policy 800, *Assessment, Training & Homestudy Process for Adoptive Families*
 - *MEPA Complaint Procedure*
 - *Standards of Conduct – Employee & Contractor/Provider Compliance with MEPA & Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Effective February 1, 2005*
 - *ODJFS Non-Discrimination Requirements for Foster Care & Adoptive Placement (JFS 01611)*
 - *ODJFS Office for Children & Families Adoption Subsidies Guide (JFS 01985)*

Use of a public computer with internet access will be provided to applicants who do not have internet access or need assistance navigating online. Printed copies of these documents will be provided upon request.

LCCS Placement Department staff will also:

- provide a postage-paid return envelope for the training registration form;
- follow up with, and provide clarification and answer questions with applicants before and after each pre-service class;
- mail reminder cards to applicants who miss pre-service classes;
- provide information about how to make up missed classes, including taking classes in other Ohio counties; and
- track, assist and support applicants throughout pre-service training.

Foster homes cannot be certified until all orientation training hours are successfully completed.

The orientation training must be completed within the eighteen (18) month period immediately prior to the date LCCS recommends the prospective foster parents for certification.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

LCCS staff assesses prospective foster parents during the pre-service training through direct observation and small group interaction.

The prospective foster parents must, at a minimum, satisfactorily complete the following prior to initial certification:

- Application for Child Placement (JFS 01691);
- release for criminal records check(s);
- fingerprinting(s);
- at least three (3) unrelated written references;
 - additional references will be required if the applicant was previously certified as a foster caregiver or provided care and supervision of children;
- physical examination(s);
- home site & safety assessment, including completing the JFS 01348, Safety Audit; and
- conduct a SACWIS/Central Registry search on each adult household member to determine suitability.

All of the above information is factored into the decision to initially certify the foster family.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Foster caregiver shall be at least twenty-one years of age.

A foster caregiver applicant must be a legal resident of the United States and reside in the State of Ohio. An applicant for foster care cannot be considered until the person has established Ohio residency.

At least one foster caregiver in the home shall be able to read, write, and speak in English or be able to effectively communicate with any child placed in their home and with Lucas County Children Services.

A foster caregiver may be a legally married couple, a single person or co-parent(s).

A foster caregiver shall have an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of the household and to make timely payment of shelter costs, utility bills, and other debts.

A foster caregiver and all members of the household shall be free of any physical, emotional, or mental condition that would endanger a child or seriously impair the ability of the foster caregiver to care for a foster child.

Applicants shall have an JFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members" completed for the applicant and all household members by a licensed physician within six (6) months prior to the agency's initial recommendation for certification.

An applicant may be required to secure and provide a report, in addition to the JFS 01653, of an examination of any member of the household by a licensed physician, psychologist, or other certified or licensed professional if:

- an applicant or any person residing within the household has suffered a serious illness or injury within the past year; or
- Lucas County Children Services determines it to be necessary to ensure the safety, health, or care of any foster child who may be placed in the home.

Lucas County Children Services shall require each foster caregiver obtain an inspection of the foster home by a state certified fire safety inspector or the state fire marshal's office using the JFS 01200 "Fire Inspection Report For Homes or Residential Facilities Certified/Approved by ODJFS" (rev. 10/2000) or other form used for a local or state fire inspection, not more than twelve months prior to the agency's recommendation for initial certification, certifying the foster home is free from conditions hazardous to the safety of foster children.

RESTRICTIONS

A foster caregiver cannot be recommended for certification by more than one (1) recommending agency at a time.

A foster caregiver shall not operate the home as an adult boarding or rooming house.

A foster caregiver shall obtain written approval from Lucas County Children Services prior to conducting any business, or allowing any business to operate, including babysitting services, in the home.

Lucas County Children Services shall not issue a certificate to a prospective foster home or prospective specialized foster home if the prospective foster home or prospective specialized foster home operates as a type A family day-care home pursuant to Chapter 5104. of the Ohio Revised Code. The department shall not issue a certificate to a prospective specialized foster home if the prospective specialized foster home operates a type B family day-care home pursuant to Chapter 5104. of the Ohio Revised Code.

ONGOING TRAINING

Following initial certification, each foster parent (both members of a couple or co-parents) must complete ongoing training during each certification period as required by the OAC (see Policy 735A).

CRIMINAL OFFENSES /CONVICTION

It is the prospective foster caregiver's duty to provide verification to Lucas County Children Services that they, or any member of their household, have not been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any offences listed in the Ohio Revised Code pursuant to foster care that would not permit them to be certified.

Lucas County Children Services shall conduct criminal record checks for the prospective foster caregiver and all other persons eighteen years of age or older who reside with the foster caregiver to determine whether a prospective foster caregiver is qualified to be certified as a foster caregiver.

Lucas County Children Services shall conduct a juvenile record check for all persons at least twelve (12) years of age, but under the age of eighteen (18), who reside with the foster caregiver to determine whether a prospective foster caregiver is qualified to be certified as a foster caregiver.

Lucas County Children Services shall not approve a prospective foster caregiver on a conditional basis pending the results of the criminal records check required by rule. The required criminal records check must be completed prior to Lucas County Children Services recommending a prospective foster caregiver for certification.

If any of the following have a felony conviction for spousal abuse, rape, sexual assault, or homicide, the foster home shall not be certified and no rehabilitation standards exist for:

- 1) an adult resident in the household of a foster caregiver or applicant;
- 2) a foster caregiver; or
- 3) a foster care applicant.

Lucas County Children Services shall request a check of the child abuse and neglect registry of any other state a prospective foster caregiver or other adult household member in the applicant's home resided in, the five (5) years immediately prior to the date of the criminal records check as required by division (A) of section 2151.86 of the Ohio Revised Code.

NOTIFICATION

A foster caregiver or prospective foster caregiver shall notify Lucas County Children Services, in writing, within twenty-four (24) hours, if a person at least twelve (12) years of age, but less than eighteen years of age, residing with the foster caregiver or prospective foster caregiver has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any of the offenses listed in Appendix A of Rule 5101:2-7-14 of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC), or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by

an adult would have constituted such a violation. Notification is also required for any conviction or adjudication of delinquency resulting from a violation of an existing or former law of this state, any other state, or the United States, that is substantially equivalent to any of the offenses listed in Appendix A of Rule 5101:2-7-14 of the OAC.

If Lucas County Children Services subsequently learns that a foster caregiver has failed to notify the agency of the above, Lucas County Children Services will notify ODJFS, who shall then initiate action to revoke the foster caregiver's certificate.

ODJFS shall deny a foster home certificate on the grounds that a person at least twelve (12) years of age, but less than eighteen (18) years of age, residing with the foster caregiver or prospective foster caregiver has been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to, an offense listed in Appendix A of OAC 5101:2-7-14 or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult would have constituted such an offense, unless the agency establishes that the delinquent child meets the rehabilitation provisions of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). Lucas County Children Services will view these provisions considering the age and sex of children that are or would be placed in the foster home.

A foster caregiver or prospective caregiver shall notify the recommending agency within twenty-four (24) hours of any charge of any criminal offense brought against the caregiver or any resident of his/her home. If the charges result in a conviction, the foster caregiver shall notify the recommending agency, in writing, within twenty-four (24) hours of conviction. Failure to notify the agency in either of these circumstances shall result in ODJFS seeking an order to revoke the caregiver's certificate to operate a foster family.

A foster caregiver or applicant shall comply with all agency policies or instructions.

The following referenced documents are incorporated as part of LCCS' foster policy:

- MEPA Complaint Procedure
- Standards of Conduct regarding MEPA and Title VI
- JFS 01611 - Non-Discrimination Requirement for Foster Care and Adoptive Placement

CASE PRACTICE GUIDES

Any amendment/change to this policy must be submitted to ODJFS within 30 days following the policy change.

If the policy amendment/change is in response to a rule change in OAC, the policy must be submitted within 30 days of the effective date of the rule change.

RELATED POLICIES and FORMS

LCCS Policy 540 (Interpreter & Translator Services for Families)
LCCS Policy 701 (Sibling Group Foster Placements)
LCCS Policy 730 Foster Home Reimbursement
LCCS Policy 735A (Foster Care Annual Training Requirements)

LCCS Policy 750 (Foster & Adoptive Home Recruitment)
LCCS Policy 751 (Simultaneous Approval of Applicants for Adoption and Foster Care)
LCCS Policy 800 (Assessment, Training & Homestudy Process for Adoptive Families)
JFS 01348 (Safety Audit of a Family Foster Home)
JFS 01688 (Individualized Child Assessment Form)
JFS 01653 (Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and all Household Members)
JFS 01673 (Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services Assessment for Child Placement Homestudy)
JFS 01681 (Applicant Financial Statement)
JFS 01691 (Application for Child Placement)
JFS 01611 (Non-discrimination Requirement for Foster Care and Adoptive Placements)
MEPA Complaint Procedure
Standard of Conduct regarding MEPA and Title VI
Pre-Service Training Curriculum for Foster, Adoptive, Kinship Parents/Caregivers
LCCS Foster Care Continuum
LCCS Training Plan
Appendix A