

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>221</h1>
Chapter:	Residential Licensing	
Subject:	Licensing and Review of Foster Family Homes	Page 1 of 5
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Purpose

To outline procedures for the licensing of family foster homes, including term of licensure, renewal and handling of complaints.

Policy

Staff of the Residential Licensing Unit shall conduct evaluations of foster homes. Only under circumstances that prevent an RLU visit prior to a child’s placement is District Office staff expected to conduct the licensing compliance review, which shall take place no later than at the time of placement.

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PROCEDURE

A. *APPLICATON FOR LICENSURE*

There are three options for licensing evaluation, depending upon the circumstances of the applicant:

Inquiry with No Child Identified for Placement

District Office staff will provide the applicant with an Application to Care for Children in Custody (FS-621). The applicant will complete the first part of the FS-621 (including the two pages of family and home information, Agreement of Care Providers, appropriate release forms, and Information on Household Members forms) and return it to the District Office, who forwards it to RLU.

The RLU completes all background checks and assigns the application to an LSW. If approved, the license is issued for up to three years.

When a Child is Placed in an Unlicensed Home

District Office staff will provide the applicant with an Application to Care for Children in Custody (FS-621). The applicant will complete the first part of the FS-621 (including the two pages of family and home information, Agreement of Care Providers, appropriate release forms, and Information on Household Members forms).

The district office will complete the Licensing Compliance Documentation and District Office Assessment and fax the completed application to the RLU within one working day of placement.

After the RLU completes all background checks, the licensing supervisor reviews the material. The licensing supervisor may request that an LSW gather further information before taking one of the following actions:

- Approval is given, and a license for one year is granted and is limited to the foster child placed in the home. An LSW follows up with a home visit at the time of renewal. If compliance to regulations is noted on the RLU Visit Documentation form, the licenser issues an amended license for up to three years.

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- **Concerns exist.** A licensing social worker is assigned to evaluate the applicant(s). In this case, the licensor will:
 - Evaluate the physical facility;
 - Assess compliance with regulations, discussing any actions needed to assure compliance with regulations;
 - Evaluate the family’s ability to provide effective foster care, including the kinds of children the family is best suited to foster;
 - Complete the following documentation:
 - Licensing Compliance Documentation
 - Residential Licensing Unit Review; and
 - A summary of the family's strengths and areas for concern, making a recommendation for use of the home, and a recommendation regarding licensure.

If approved, a license for up to three years is issued.

- **The application is denied.** If at any point the LSW, in consultation with the licensing supervisor, determines that the applicant does not meet regulations, the licensing report will recommend denial of the application. An Assistant Attorney General shall review the proposed action. The Residential Licensing Chief will inform the applicant in writing of this decision. The letter will note specific areas of noncompliance, and inform the applicant of the process to appeal the denial.

When a Placement of a Child is Planned or Pending

District Office staff will provide the applicant with an Application to Care for Children in Custody (FS-621). The applicant will complete the first part of the FS-621 (including the two pages of family and home information, Agreement of Care Providers, appropriate release forms, and Information on Household Members forms). District Office staff faxes the completed forms to the RLU as soon as possible.

District staff shall consult with their assigned licensor to arrange for the licensor to visit the home for the licensing evaluation. *If such a visit cannot be scheduled prior to the expected placement of a child*, the district office will complete the Licensing Compliance Documentation and District Office Assessment and fax the completed application to the RLU within one working day of placement.

The RLU completes all background checks. The licensing supervisor reviews the material, with one of the three outcomes listed above.

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Term of License

Initial licenses issued on the basis of District Office evaluation will be for one year. Initial licenses issued on the basis of an LSW evaluation will be for up to three years. Renewals are for three years. These time frames can be decreased under extenuating circumstances.

B. RENEWAL OF LICENSES

RLU sends a renewal application to the licensee, and requests information from district offices on each family due for renewal. Upon receipt of the completed renewal application, RLU will complete all background checks.

Assigned RLU staff evaluates all information received.

- If the information is complete, there have been no significant changes, and there is no indication of non-compliance to regulations, a renewal report is generated and a three-year license is issued.
- If information is incomplete, or if there have been significant changes or concerns noted, RLU staff will evaluate further to determine compliance. A site visit may or may not be needed. A report is generated, and, if appropriate, a 3-year license is issued.

C. ONGOING REVIEW OF LICENSES

Record and Registry Checks

If at any time, the results of any record or registry check indicate that compliance to a regulation is questionable, RLU staff will notify a LSW or supervisor. If the information indicates a child's welfare may be negatively affected, the RLU will notify the district office immediately.

Changes of Residence

When a foster family moves to a new residence, a site visit is needed to evaluate the physical facility. If a foster child is in the home at the time of the foster family' move, District Office staff visits the home, complete the "Change of Residence" form and submits it to RLU. If all regulations are met, the RLU will approve the issuance of an amended license.

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If there is no foster child in the home at the time of the move, a LSW will make a site visit, complete the “Change of Residence” form. If all regulations are met, the RLU will approve the issuance of an amended license.

Changes in Household Composition

The district office will notify the RLU of any significant changes in the household composition of a family foster home (not including the placement or removal of foster children). If necessary, the RLU obtains additional information about the changes and conducts record and registry checks. Based on the specific nature of the changes and the results of background checks, the RLU will determine if further licensing review and/or amendment of the license is necessary. If a new care taking adult is added to the license, the amended license is issued for one year.

Complaints

The licensing supervisor will review all complaints about licensed family foster homes and determine the appropriate action. An LSW may be assigned to investigate the complaint. Following the completion of the investigation, the licensor will prepare a report for review by the licensing supervisor. The licensing supervisor will notify the foster parent(s) and the district in writing of the outcome of the investigation and any actions to be taken.

Removal of Children from Foster Homes

During the application process, or during subsequent complaint investigations, if RLU staff believes a child’s welfare is significantly compromised, a “hold” on placements will be issued. If RLU staff believes a child is in serious jeopardy, district office staff is notified that the child must move.

Revocation

If the LSW, in consultation with the licensing supervisor, determines that the licensee is not in compliance with regulations, the licensing or investigation report will recommend revocation of the license. An Assistant Attorney General shall review the proposed action. The Residential Licensing Chief will inform the licensee in writing of this decision. The letter will note specific areas of noncompliance, and inform the licensee of the process to appeal the revocation.