

Division of Children and Family Services Protection and Safety Procedure # 9-2015	
Regarding:	Completion of a Home Study for Licensed, Relative, Kinship, Adoptive, Parental and ICPC Foster Homes and Standardized Format
Date Effective:	03/30/2015
Rescinds:	Administrative Memo #11-05; Program Memo #1-2000
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Issue by:	Tony Green, Acting Director, Division of Children and Family Services



Philosophy:

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) believes that the thorough assessment and evaluation of a family seeking or currently providing foster or adoptive care, through a Home Study, is necessary to ensure the safety and stability of children placed in out of home care.

Procedure:

DEFINITIONS:

Home Study Format:

All Home Studies, regardless of type, shall be completed using the attached Home Study Format.

Licensed Foster Home Study:

A Home Study must be completed prior to a foster care license being issued. All categories within the Home Study must be thoroughly assessed and documented in order to determine the safety and suitability of a person or persons to provide foster care for a child or children. All applicable background checks must be obtained, reviewed and documented prior to the finalization of the Home Study.

Relative Foster Home Study Prior to Placement:

A Relative Foster Home Study for a relative of a child, children, or their siblings, may be completed prior to the placement in the relative's home. All categories within the Home Study shall be thoroughly assessed and documented; and, additional information shall be gathered in the Motivation to Foster/Adopt Children subject area related to the relative's relationship with the child's parent (s), ability to meet the needs of the child, maintain the child's safety and work cooperatively with the child's parent (s). Information shall be gathered and documented within the evaluation category to determine if additional support or training may be necessary to ensure the child's stability of placement in the home.

Relative Foster Home Study After Placement Occurs:

A Relative Foster Home Study shall be completed when a child or children are placed in a relative's home on an emergency basis, within thirty calendar days of placement of the child or children. All categories within the Home Study shall be thoroughly assessed and documented as well as additional information shall be gathered in the Motivation to Foster/Adopt Children subject area related to the relative's relationship with the child's parent (s), ability to meet the needs of the child, maintain the child's safety and work cooperatively with the child's parent (s). Information should be gathered and documented

within the evaluation category to determine if additional support or training may be necessary to ensure the child's stability of placement in the home.

Kinship Foster Home Study Prior to Placement:

A Kinship Foster Home Study may be completed prior to the placement of a child or children in a Kinship home. A Kinship Home is defined as non-relative (s) of the child who have a significant pre-existing relationship with the child or sibling of the child. All categories within the Home Study shall be thoroughly assessed and documented as well as additional information shall be gathered in the Motivation to Foster/Adopt Children subject area related to the kinship person(s)' relationship with the child's parent (s), ability to meet the needs of the child, maintain the child's safety and work cooperatively with the child's parent (s). Information shall be gathered and documented within the evaluation category to determine if additional support or training may be necessary to ensure the child's stability of placement in the home.

Kinship Foster Home Study After Placement Occurs:

A Kinship Foster Home Study shall be completed when a child or children are placed in a kinship home on an emergency basis, within thirty calendar days of placement of the child or children. All categories within the Home Study shall be thoroughly assessed and documented as well as additional information shall be gathered in the Motivation to Foster/Adopt Children subject area related to the kinship person(s)' relationship with the child's parent (s), ability to meet the needs of the child, maintain the child's safety and work cooperatively with the child's parent (s). Information shall be gathered and documented within the evaluation category to determine if additional support or training may be necessary to ensure the child's stability of placement in the home.

Adoptive Home Study:

An Adoptive Home Study may be completed prior to the placement of a child or children in the foster home, if the child is available for adoption. Adoptive Home Studies shall only be completed by employees of Child Placing Agencies that also are licensed Adoption Agencies or Department of Health and Human Services Staff.

Persons who are not currently foster parents and are seeking a pre-adoptive Home Study shall be referred to a private licensed adoption agency. If there is no private licensed adoption agency serving their area, the Department of Health and Human Services may complete a pre-adoptive Home Study for a fee of \$1100.

Post Placement Adoptive Home Study:

A Post Placement Adoptive Home Study shall be completed when a child has resided in a foster home and the permanency plan for the child is adoption with those foster parents. A Post Placement Adoptive Home Study shall specifically address the needs of the child and the plan for the adoptive parents to meet those needs, the parent's ability to transition from foster parent to adoptive parent, and their ability and willingness to be supportive of the child's history and need for family connections.

Parental Home Study:

A Home Study shall only be completed on a parent of a child or children using the Home Study standardized format on order of the Court or through the Interstate Compact Placement Agreement. For purposes of a Parental Home Study for placement, the parent will not be subjected to a national criminal history check through fingerprinting.

Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) Home Study:

Another state may request a Home Study of parents, relatives or kin for persons residing in Nebraska. These Home Studies will be completed using the Standardized Home Study Format. The completion time for these Home Studies shall be in accordance with Interstate Compact Placement of Children Regulations.

INITIAL HOME STUDY PROCESS:

A DCFS Resource Development Worker, contracted Child Placing Foster Care Agency staff person, or other qualified and approved contracted person, must conduct a Home Study using the Home Study Format. A minimum of one in-person home visit shall occur; follow up home visits may occur for the gathering of additional information. All household members shall be interviewed or observed if not of an age to be interviewed. A thorough assessment of the home shall include the following:

I. Pertinent Information:

This section includes Name, Type and Date of Home Study, Author of Home Study.

II. Participant Information including:

- 1) Family Background and;
- 2) Currently Family Composition including children and other adults living in the home and;
- 3) Self-Awareness and;
- 4) Physical and Behavioral Health and;
- 5) Parenting and;
- 6) Motivation to Foster/Adopt Children and;
- 7) Ability to Meet the Child's Social, Emotional, Educational and Physical Healthcare Needs and;
- 8) Support Systems and;
- 9) Employment and;
- 10) Education and Military and;
- 11) Current Living Arrangements/Description of the Home and;
- 12) Transportation and;
- 13) Finances

III. References and Medical Report:

Licensed Foster Home:

Three positive references shall be obtained from persons age 19 or older for all applicants participating in Licensed Foster Home Study, of which only one may be from a relative.

A Health Information Report shall be completed by each household member of the age of majority who will provide care, including each applicant, and shall be signed by a health practitioner.

IV. Relative or Kinship Foster Home:

Three positive references shall be obtained from persons age 19 or older for all adult caregivers participating in in the Relative or Kinship Home Study. References may be from family or non-family members. If three positive references are unable to be obtained, consultation with the

Resource Development Administrator will occur to determine if the references gathered are sufficient enough to proceed with the Home Study.

Health Information Reports are not required in relative or kinship homes, however should concerns arise about an individual's health impacting the care of a child or children during the Home Study, DCFS may ask for a voluntary health information report to be completed by a health practitioner.

V. Evaluation:

The evaluation section of the Home Study must provide an analysis of the information gathered to draw conclusions that identify the family's strengths, needs and any recommendations. The Home Study shall be signed by the author of the Home Study and the author's supervisor or the supervisor's designee.

VI. Background Checks

Background Checks and Results will be documented within the Home Study Format under Home Study Addendum.

Documentation:

Completed Home Studies, once signed by the author and author's supervisor or supervisor's designee, shall be scanned into the N-Focus organization within the Home Study Category.

HOME STUDY UPDATES:

A Home Study Update occurs when an initial Home Study has been completed and:

- 1) A licensed foster home is submitting an application for licensing renewal; or
- 2) There has been a change in three or more areas of the Home Study including but not limited to, change in household membership or structural changes within the home; or
- 3) A new adult has moved into the foster home.

A minimum of one in person home visit shall be conducted for any Home Study Update that involves new adults residing in the home or structural changes to the home. Such update shall utilize the Home Study Format to document all changes and the evaluation and recommendations related to any changes.

HOME STUDY ADDENDUM:

A Home Study Addendum occurs when an initial Home Study has been completed and there are two or less changes in an area of the home study. A Foster Home Study Addendum may be written in letter format and should address the area (s) of change that have or has occurred.

RELEASE OF HOME STUDIES:

The Division of Children and Family Services may release a Home Study to a Licensed Child Placing Agency contracted with the Department of Health and Human Services when the following occurs:

- 1) The foster parent (s) sign a HIPAA compliant release indicating they are in agreement with the release of the Home Study, and
- 2) A letter accompanies the Home Study indicating that the receiving party may not share the Home Study with another person or entity.

Foster parents may review their Home Study at a DCFS office upon request, but will not be provided a copy of the Home Study.

Attachments: Home Study Format
Home Study Guidebook
HIPPA Release of Information
Confidentiality Letter

References:

395 NAC 3-003
Neb. Rev. Stat. 43 107