

Section 4.4.8: Foster Home Assessment and Review

4.0 OUT-OF-HOME CARE RESOURCES

4.4.8 Foster Home Assessment and Review

Policy

The Ministry shall have personal, private contact with the foster family in their home a minimum of once every 6 months to ensure that they are able to maintain the expected standards of care and meet the terms of approval and the foster home agreement.

Each foster home shall be reviewed at least on an annual basis.

Standards

Annual Review /Family Development Plan:

- Foster homes shall be **reviewed** at least once per calendar year, using the PRIDE “Family Development Plan” format. (See Chapter 12 “Forms”)
- At the time of annual review, the caseworker completes a home safety check, ensures that criminal record checks are completed as necessary (see “Procedures” below), reviews confidentiality requirements and the Ministry’s discipline policy with the family, and reviews and signs the Agreement for Foster Care Services.
- Upon completion of an annual review, a written Family Development Plan report shall be completed.
- The Annual Review / Family Development Plan report shall be signed by the foster parent(s), caseworker and supervisor, and a copy provided to the foster parent(s). A signed copy will be placed on the foster family file.

Formal Review:

- In addition to annual reviews, foster homes shall be subject to **formal review** when there are concerns about the family's ability to provide care for a child, but where a foster home investigation is not warranted. (See also Chapter 4.4.10 “Investigations of Abuse or Neglect”.) The following are circumstances which would warrant a formal review:
 - when there are concerns regarding the quality of care provided to children placed in the home;
 - when there has been a significant change in the family's circumstances which may impede the family's ability to foster; for example, birth or death in the family, adoption, separation or divorce;

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- if the range of acceptance (as established at the time of approval or at subsequent annual reviews) is to be changed;
- at any point where there is reason to believe that the foster family is unable or unwilling to meet the terms of the foster home agreement or provide care for children as assessed according to the PRIDE competency categories;
- when information is received indicating that any member of the household has been charged with a criminal offense.

When completing an annual review or a formal review of a foster family, the caseworker must assure that all standards of the original approval are met and assess whether the foster home should continue to be approved for ongoing care.

Procedures

Annual Review / Family Development Plan

The Annual review / Family Development Plan is completed covering all reporting areas fully.

The Family Development Plan is signed by the foster parent(s), caseworker, and supervisor and a copy provided to the foster parent(s). A signed copy will be placed on the foster family file.

At the time of annual review, the following steps must be completed:

- The caseworker reviews the "Agreement for Foster Care Services" (Chapter 12 "Forms") with the foster family and the agreement is signed.
- Adult foster family members complete and sign a "Criminal Record Declaration" form (Chapter 12 "Forms"). This is to be signed by anyone 18 years of age and older, who was a resident in the home at the time of approval of the home, including biological children of the foster family.
- Youth in care of the Minister are not required to complete the "Criminal Record Declaration" form as the caseworker would have obtained information regarding any criminal charges or convictions.
- For any individuals 18 years of age and older who have become residents of the foster home since the time of approval, the caseworker ensures that a Criminal Record check and Ministry Record search is completed.
- The caseworker ensures that biological children aged 18 years or older who are living in the foster home submit a Criminal Record Check prior to their nineteenth birthday (subsequently they will complete a "Criminal Record Declaration" form at the time of each annual review as noted above).
- The caseworker completes a foster home safety check, including checking to ensure that smoke detectors on each level are working.

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- The caseworker views the sleeping arrangements for the children in the home.
- The caseworker reviews the Ministry's discipline policy for children in care with the foster family.
- The caseworker reviews confidentiality provisions as set out in Section 74 of the Child and Family Services legislation with the foster family.

Formal Review:

The caseworker informs the foster family of the reason for the review and arranges a time to meet with the family. (The family may wish to access the support of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association throughout this process.)

Foster family members, children in care, other workers and collateral agencies are interviewed whenever it is appropriate to the situation.

When all the required information is obtained, it is documented by the caseworker using the standard format (Chapter 12 Forms "Foster Family Formal Review") and submitted to the supervisor for review and consultation. Observations and statements must be supported with behavioral descriptions. The supervisor may recommend further assessment or information.

Where it is agreed between the supervisor and the caseworker that no further action is required, the supervisor and the caseworker are to determine the approval status of the home as follows:

- continued approval with no conditions
- approval with conditions
- on hold with conditions
- closure of the home

The final report is completed, stating the reason for the review, the results of the review and the recommended actions or outcomes.

The caseworker and supervisor will sign the report and the caseworker will review the report with the foster parents. The foster parents will sign the report, if they agree with the contents and recommendations.

A copy of the final report is provided to the foster family with a copy placed on their file.

If the foster family disagrees with the report, they will indicate this in writing to the foster home worker. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the caseworker will advise the foster family that they may access the policies and processes set out in the Children's Services Manual, Chapter, 4.4.12 "Conflict Resolution" and Chapter 4.4.13 "Appeal Process".

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Practice Guidelines

General:

Foster home workers are to maintain regular contact with foster families including in-home consultations. Such contacts are for the purpose of providing support and assessing the quality of services provided.

- Whenever there is contact with a member of the foster family, the caseworker must determine whether there are indicators that the family:
- may need additional support;
- may require additional PRIDE Core and/or specialized training;
- may be having problems meeting the needs of children in their care;
- may be unable or unwilling to meet the terms of the contract.

Where a worker is aware of potential concerns, these must be discussed with the foster parents to determine whether coaching, training or other supports are required.

Annual Review / Family Development Plan:

The Annual Review / Family Development Plan is important to ensure that a foster family continues to provide safe, quality care. It is part of the ongoing work with a foster family and needs to be proactive, constructive, supportive and strengthening.

The Annual Review / Family Development Plan assessment should be a mutual process between the foster home worker and the foster family. The overall objective should be to help the foster family identify the skills, supports and any additional training they require to meet the needs of the children in their care.

At least one in-home consultation is required to complete the Annual Review / Family Development Plan. Caseworkers will use this in-home time to interview the foster parents, determine ongoing training and support needs, and ensure that all steps outlined in "Procedures" are completed.

Each member of the family and other residents should be interviewed. This should include both parents in a two parent family, adult children or other adults who may be living in the home and any children of the foster family who could reasonably be expected to participate.

Any child in care who could reasonably be expected to contribute to the assessment, based on age and developmental capacity, should be interviewed.

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Any worker who has placed children in the home should be interviewed or complete a written assessment (see template Chapter 12.34), based on their knowledge of the home. Any collateral agency that has significant knowledge of the home may be interviewed. Such agencies include schools, crisis units, or Community Based Organizations providing services to the child and the foster family. These individuals should state the extent to which they have observed or have other direct knowledge of the foster family.

Where an Annual Review / Family Development Plan is not completed within a calendar year, or if a Formal Review is in progress due to a change in circumstance, consideration should be made as to whether new placements should be made. The safety and care of children currently placed must be ensured during the interim.

Where a home has no children currently placed and has not had a child placed during the past calendar year, an assessment must be made annually as to the family's interest and ability to foster. Where it is unlikely that the family will take further placements, the foster home file should be closed. A letter should be sent to the foster family indicating that their file is closed and no further children will be placed with them. The letter should also thank the foster family for their contribution to the Ministry.

Formal Review:

Formal reviews are intended for those situations where there are serious concerns about a foster family's abilities, actions, or standards of the home, but where a foster home investigation is not warranted.

The issues or concerns may have been brought to the foster family's attention on previous occasions with no satisfactory outcome or results.

The nature of the concern, the assessment of validity, and any recommendations for corrective action must be documented on the foster family file, using the standard format (Chapter 12 Forms "Foster Family Formal Review"). The report need only address the reporting areas that are relevant.

The foster family must be provided with the opportunity to respond to the concerns and work with the foster home worker to address the concerns.

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