

## LCCS POLICY 735

### Assessment, Training and Homestudy Process for Foster Families

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<b>Revision Dates:</b>	12/17/93, 5/11/98, 11/25/98, 4/05/2000, 12/15/03, 8/30/05, 11/4/2008; 2/17/2009
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<b>Current Effective Date:</b>	9/12/05, 12/1/2008; 2/17/2009
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<b>Reason for Obsoleting/Combining:</b>	
<b>See new Policy #:</b>	

<b>Scope:</b>	All foster care caseworkers, foster care supervisors, foster parents and those applying to be foster parents.
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Placement Department Manager
<b>Purpose:</b>	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.
<b>Legal Cite:</b>	O.R.C. §§ 5103.03, 5153.16; O.A.C. 5101:2-5-13, 5101:2-5-20, 5101:2-5-38, 5101:2-7-14, 5101:2-48-09.

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### **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).

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### **PROCEDURE - including required timeframes and documentation**

LCCS will ensure that the foster process is in compliance with the provisions of:

- 42 U.S.C. 671(a), the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89
- Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, et seq.
- The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9), 671(a)(18), 674(d) and 1996(b) (hereinafter “MEPA”); and

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq. (hereinafter “Title VI”).

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:

- Send information packets to applicants, within seven (7) business days of initial contact, that contain:
  - >an introductory letter;
  - >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
  - >requirement and registration information;
  - >an *Application for Child Placement* form (JFS 01691, Rev. 12/2006);
  - >a booklet containing copies of
    - \*LCCS Policy 800, *Assessment, Training & Homestudy Process for Adoptive Families*
    - \*LCCS Policy 735, *Assessment, Training & Homestudy Process for Foster Families*
    - \*MEPA Compliant Procedure
    - \**Standards of Conduct - Employee & Contractor/Provider Compliance with MEPA & Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Effective February 1, 2005*
    - \*LCCS Policy 751, *Simultaneous Approval of Applicants for Adoption & Foster Care*
    - \**ODJFS Non-Discrimination Requirements for Foster Care & Adoptive Placements (JFS 01611*
    - \**ODJFS Office for Children & Families Adoption Subsidies Guide (JFS 01985)*
  - >LCCS brochures about foster care & adoption, and;
  - >a postage paid return envelope for the completed application
- Follow up with, 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.
- 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.
- Conducting a SACWIS/Central Registry search on each adult household member to determine suitability.

The homestudy worker and the prospective foster parents meet on, at least, two occasions to discuss topics such as history of family of origin, care and discipline of children, agency procedures and foster care rules.

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/adoptive caregiver shall be at least 18 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 can not 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 which 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 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.

## **RESTRICTIONS**

A foster caregiver can not 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.

A foster caregiver shall not provide or allow babysitting services in a family foster home such that more than ten children, including foster, natural or adoptive children are present and under the supervision of a caregiver at any one time. Any caregiver that is an approved or certified type B family day care home provider shall follow the requirements for approval or certification as a type B family day care home.

## **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 have not been, or any member of their household, convicted of or pleaded guilty to any offences listed in the 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 years of age but under the age of eighteen 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.

## **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 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 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 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 hours of any charge of any criminal offense brought against the caregiver or any resident of his home. If the charges result in a conviction, the foster caregiver shall notify the recommending agency, in writing, within twenty-four 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 attached and referenced documents are incorporated as part of LCCS's foster policy:

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

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## **CASE PRACTICE GUIDES**

Any amendment/change to this policy must be submitted to ODJFS within 10 days following the policy change.

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## **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 735A Foster Care Annual Training Requirements  
LCCS Policy 740 (Grievance Review & Resolution Procedures)  
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