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|  VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual | | <h1>221</h1> |
| Chapter: | Residential Licensing and Special Investigations | |
| Subject: | Foster Care Licensing | Page 1 of 17 |
| Approved: | Karen Shea, Deputy Commissioner | Effective: 5/2/2019 |
| Supersedes: | Family Services Policy 221 | Dated: 4/19/2018 |

Purpose

To outline licensing procedures for foster homes.

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Related Policies & Regulations

Family Services [Policy 91](#): Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives
Family Services [Policy 220](#): Role and Functions of RLSI
Family Services [Policy 222](#): Foster Care Interventions
Family Services [Policy 224](#): Child Care by Resource Families
[Regulations for Foster Homes in Vermont](#)

Forms

FS-221A Application for Care of Children in DCF Custody

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| FS-221B | Renewal Application for Care of Children in DCF Custody |
| FS-221C | Request for Regulation Variance or Capacity Change |
| FS-221D | Request to Modify a Foster Care License |
| FS-221E | Foster Home Change of Residence |
| FS-221F | Request to Close a Foster Care License |
| FS-221G | Request for Parent to Reside with Child in DCF Custody |

Definitions

Amendment: A modification to a limitation, capacity, variance, or term of an existing license.

Capacity: The number of children a home is licensed to provide care for.

Child Care: Licensed child care, registered child care, legally exempt child care, and unregulated care of children on a regular and continuous basis for compensation.

Condition: A time limited requirement to which the licensee shall achieve compliance prior to issuance of a license.

Denial: The formal decision of the state licensing authority to not grant a foster home license to an applicant.

Foster Care: The care of a child, for a valuable consideration, in a child care institution or in a family other than that of the child's parent, guardian, or relative (33 V.S.A. § 4902). Foster care of a child to exceed 15 days must be licensed per 33 V.S.A. § 4905.


Family Foster Care: Foster care provided in a family home on a 24-hour basis.

- **Community Foster Care:** Family foster care provided by individuals who are not relative/kin or fictive kin.
- **Kinship Foster Care:** Family foster care provided by a relative/kin or fictive kin.

Family Foster Home: The physical premises in which family foster care is provided and the household members reside.

Foster Parent: A person licensed to provide family foster care; a person required by state law to be so licensed.

Family Foster Care License: Authorization from the state licensing authority for an individual(s) to provide family foster care. The license shall identify the individual(s);

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the family foster home physical address; term as defined by effective and expiration dates; capacity, and any limitations or variances.

Household Member: Any person, whether a family member or not, who lives, sleeps, or regularly utilizes the common areas in the foster home.

Limit or Limitation: Specific restrictions imposed on the license. Examples of such restrictions may include the age of children in care and/or specific children in care. Other restrictions may also be imposed.

Respite Care: Planned care intended to provide a break for the child or youth’s caregiver.

Revocation: The formal invalidation, for cause, of a license by the licensing authority.

Variance: An exception to a rule granted by the licensing authority in circumstances when the immediate or literal application of a rule would result in unnecessary hardship for the licensee or for a child and family; and when the intent of the rule can be achieved by other means.

Policy

Application for Licensure

Applications for family foster care are received as:

- General inquiries to provide foster care; or
- Applications specific to the care of a particular child.

Applications related to a specific child includes out-of-state [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children](#) (ICPC) requests for home studies.

Application with No Child Placed

District office staff provide the applicant with the FS-221A (*Application for Care of Children in DCF Custody*). The applicant will complete the application and return it to the district office. District office staff will electronically forward the application to the RLSI administrative mailbox (AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov). The email subject line should contain the phrase “No Child Placed”.

RLSI will complete the licensure process as described by this policy within 120 days assuming (1) the receipt of a fully completed application and (2) the applicant’s compliance with the background check and evaluation processes.

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Application with a Child Placed (District-Approved Unlicensed Placements)

District office staff shall exercise caution when recommending the placement of a child or youth in a district-approved unlicensed foster home. The risks are heightened when placing a young person in a home with caregivers who have not been evaluated through the full licensing process by RLSI. Prior to requesting approval from the district director, district office staff shall:

- Provide the applicant with the FS-221A (*Application for Care of Children in DCF Custody*) and ensure the applicant fully completes it;
- Review the application for significant concerns;
- Run the names (current, maiden, and any previously used names or aliases) of all household members ages 16 and older through a Vermont Court Access System (VCAS) check and DCF master index check;
- Conduct a home visit with the applicants as a preliminary assessment of their caregiving abilities and to ensure the structure of the home is safe;
- Inspect the applicant’s home to verify the licensing compliance documentation expectations have been satisfied; AND
- Document these efforts and a recommendation of placement approval or denial on the *Assessment of Suitability to Care for a Child Form* (included in the FS-221A) utilizing Appendix I of this policy.

Division staff will use Appendix I of this policy to guide the assessment of suitability of individuals being considered for a district approved unlicensed placement. If behaviors or circumstances described in the unsafe/dangerous category (RED) of Appendix I are present, the division **shall not** place a child with the individual or in the household.

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| <p>For relative/kin applicants:</p> | <p>If behaviors or circumstances indicate further assessment is needed (YELLOW) per Appendix I, the division will gather the necessary information, have a discussion with the individual/household members, and determine the current relevancy as it pertains to their suitability to care for the child(ren) based on their needs and vulnerabilities.</p> <p>The <i>Assessment of Suitability to Care for a Child Form</i> (included in the FS-221A) must be completed, and the district director or designee must approve of the placement.</p> |
| <p>For community applicants:</p> | <p>In order to make a district-approved unlicensed placement with a community applicant, all areas of assessment must fall within the safe category (GREEN) of Appendix I.</p> <p>The <i>Assessment of Suitability to Care for a Child Form</i> (included in the FS-221A) must be completed, and the district director or designee must approve of the placement.</p> |

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District directors, at the request of district office staff, may approve or disapprove of placement in an unlicensed foster home. When district directors approve of an unlicensed placement after reviewing the *Assessment of Suitability to Care for a Child Form* (included in the FS-221A) and sign the *Approval/Denial of District Approved Unlicensed Placement Form* (included in the FS-221A), they are confirming that all required checks, a home visit, and preliminary assessment of the applicants have occurred. If a placement is being made outside of the district office’s geographic boundaries, the placing district director will notify the other district director.

District-approved unlicensed placements should only be made when it is in the best interests of the child, particularly in instances where the child can be placed with a relative or someone known to them. The division must strive to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in these district-approved unlicensed placements.

In addition to the above steps, district office staff must do the following prior to placing a child in a district-approved unlicensed home:


- Provide the caregivers with a completed copy of the *Child Information & Placement Checklist* as required by Family Services [Policy 94](#); and
- Provide the caregivers with a completed *Foster Parent Authorization Letter* (containing both caregivers’ names, if applicable) as required by Family Services [Policy 77](#) and [Policy 94](#).

District office staff must obtain district director approval and complete licensing compliance documentation for each and any subsequent child placed in an unlicensed home. Placement in an unlicensed home is always child-specific. District office staff may not assign a capacity to a family foster home.

District office staff will electronically submit the application within 24 hours of placement to the RLSI administrative mailbox (AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov). The email subject line should contain the phrase “Child Placed”.

RLSI will complete all additional background checks within 24 hours of receipt during business days. RLSI administrative staff will notify RLSI supervisors or the RLSI director for review of any concerning background information and notify the district office as warranted.

RLSI will prioritize the licensing evaluation of unlicensed district-approved foster care over foster care applications with no child placed in a home. The issuance of a license to an applicant seeking placement of a specific child does not require placement of that child with the licensee.

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

Other states will request assessments of a potential caregiver in Vermont for placement of custodial youth. At the request of Vermont’s ICPC office, RLSI will complete a home study which will include a foster parent licensing evaluation and an assessment to determine if the family can meet the child’s needs. RLSI will share recommendations for placement and/or licensure. Vermont’s deputy compact administrator retains the final authority regarding the approval or denial of the placement. The deputy compact administrator will communicate the decision and recommendations to the sending state. Home studies regarding the placement of children or youth with a biological/legal parent do not necessitate a family foster care license but do require a home study.

Authority Regarding Placement of Children and Youth in Foster Care

The RLSI director or designee shall direct district office staff to remove children or youth from a home if the evaluation determines:

- The child or youth’s safety or welfare is significantly compromised; or
- The applicant is subject to denial or revocation; or
- The licensee becomes non-compliant with the licensing application process timeframes.

If RLSI assesses immediate danger to the child or youth, RLSI will direct district office staff to remove the child by the end of the business day. The RLSI director or designee must approve RLSI requests for removal of children from current placements.


Placements in district-approved unlicensed homes subject to impending licensure denial or placements that present significant risk with no immediate danger will result in RLSI notification to district staff that the child or youth must be moved within two weeks of notice.

Evaluation of Foster Care Application

Background Checks

Upon receipt of application, RLSI will complete the following background checks.

RLSI will initiate the fingerprint supported background check process by mailing the applicant an instruction packet and necessary materials. If the applicant loses their fingerprint packet, RLSI will distribute another one. Fingerprint supported background check results must be received by RLSI within 90 days of application submission or the application will be withdrawn or denied and any children in the home must be removed from the home within two weeks of notification. This will only occur if RLSI determines that the delay in obtaining fingerprints is the fault of the applicant.

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RLSI will initiate out-of-state child abuse registry check process upon receipt of application by requesting information from the child welfare agency of states in which applicant(s) resided within the past 5 years. RLSI will not issue a license until the results are received.

Additional background checks are completed for all applicants and household members aged 16 and older:

- Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC) criminal history;
- Vermont Child Abuse Registry check;
- Vermont Adult Abuse Registry check;
- Vermont Case Access System (VCAS) for history of abuse prevention orders;
- VT Department of Corrections (DOC) database;
- VT DMV motor vehicle record check; and
- VT Immunization Registry check.

RLSI completes one additional check for applicants only:

- VT Office of Child Support Child Support Arrearage

Any concerns revealed by these checks will be evaluated based on the potential impact on the physical safety of the child(ren), the emotional well-being of the child(ren), and appropriate role-modeling. Among the factors to be considered are:


- The nature of the concern/offense;
- How recent the concern/offense occurred;
- Number or frequency of concerns/offenses;
- Age of the person at the time;
- Attitude of the person towards the offense; and
- Evidence of rehabilitation.

When the person of concern is not the applicant, the ability and willingness of the applicant to provide appropriate protection from the person of concern will be assessed.

Offenses against people are considered more serious than offenses against property. Offenses that reflect violence or any offense against a child will be explored, no matter how long ago they occurred. All such offenses will be identified and discussed in the licensing process.

Per 42 U.S.C. § 471, an applicant for foster care, kinship care or adoption shall not be approved or licensed if the applicant has a felony conviction for:

- Child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against children (including child pornography), or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery; or

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- Physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense within the past 5 years.

Applicant Interview and Site Evaluation

An RLSI family services worker will be assigned the licensing evaluation to include:

- Educating the applicant on the licensing process and foster care regulations;
- Visiting and inspecting the family foster care home and premises;
- Interviewing applicant foster parents and other household members deemed necessary by RLSI;
- Assessing the applicant’s compliance with each regulation;
- Discussing areas of non-compliance and steps to achieve compliance;
- Reviewing areas of concern indicated on the application and in the background checks as noted above;
- Collecting third party references as appropriate; and
- Completion of a licensing evaluation report and recommendation.

Issuance of Licenses

Initial and renewed licenses will be valid for up to three years at the discretion of RLSI. Licenses may be issued for a shorter period.

A family foster care license, once issued, is defined by the following parameters:


- The names/identities of the foster parent(s);
- The physical address of the foster home;
- The term between the effective or amended date and the expiration date;
- Any limitations that are placed on the license; and
- Capacity.

Limits or Limitations

RLSI may place limitations on foster care licenses based on family circumstances and in accord with regulations. This may be done at licensure or at any time during the term of the license. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Care of a specific child or youth;
- Age, gender, and developmental needs of children able to be placed in the home; and
- Which household members may not be allowed to transport youth.

Limitations will be reviewed during licensing renewal process. Child-specific licenses do not automatically close when the child moves from the home. The child-specific license will be reviewed in consultation with the foster parent(s) for closure or continuation as a community foster care license.

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Variances to Foster Care Regulations

The licensing authority may grant a variance from a specific regulation upon its determination that the applicant(s) or foster parent(s) will otherwise meet the intent of the regulation. Variances may be requested prior to licensing or while a license is held. A variance is valid for the duration of the license unless otherwise specified by the licensing authority. A variance may be renewed.

Variance to any regulation may be given at the discretion of RLSI. Variances should be used to encourage, though are not limited to, the following situations:

- To allow for relative/kinship placement;
- To allow a child with an established meaningful relationship to be placed with those individual(s);
- To allow parenting youth to remain with their child;
- To allow siblings to remain together; and/or
- To allow a family with special training to care for a child with disabilities or specific medical needs.


Non-safety related variances for limited, child-specific kinship care is encouraged. Examples of this may include sleeping arrangements, financial means, health, and minor background check concerns that do not compromise safety.

Variances to regulations considered essential to the safety of children and youth in the home will not be granted. Of particular importance are regulations regarding significant criminal or child protection history, fire egress, firearm storage, and caregiver capacity. Refer to Appendix I of this policy. Behaviors or circumstances described in the unsafe/dangerous (RED) category cannot be considered for variances.

Variances may be requested by the applicant or licensee in communication with district office staff or RLSI staff. The request will be submitted by district office staff on the FS-221C (Request for Regulation Variance or Capacity Change) and sent to the RLSI administrative mailbox (AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov).

The request will outline:

- the specific regulation;
- the reason;
- an explanation of how intent of regulation is otherwise met;
- an evaluation of the request by RLSI staff; and
- documentation of approval decision by RLSI supervisor or director.

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All variance requests will be approved at the RLSI supervisory level. In some circumstances, additional limits may be placed on the license due to granting of variance. Documentation will be stored in the foster care file. All existing variances will be reviewed at the time of foster care license renewal and will otherwise remain in place.

Withdrawal of Application

Applicants may voluntarily withdraw their application. If an applicant chooses to reapply within 90 days of withdrawing, the original application and processed work can be reactivated without a new application.

When there is an unresolved concern that was identified during a licensing evaluation process, the applicant name(s) may be flagged in the foster care database for future licensing evaluation. If the applicant applies again in the future, it is expected that the identified issues will be revisited at that time.

If an applicant is non-responsive or fails to complete the licensure process as described in this policy, the application will be withdrawn following a written notification.

Denial of Application

Denial of foster care application will adhere to the standards set in regulation. All denials will be approved by the RLSI director.


If at any point the RLSI Family Services worker, in consultation with an RLSI supervisor, determines that the applicant does not substantially meet regulations, the licensing report will recommend denial. The denial decision will be approved by the RLSI director after recommendation by the RLSI supervisor and worker. The applicant will be informed in writing of this decision. The letter will note specific areas of noncompliance and inform the applicant of the process to appeal the denial.

Amendments and Ongoing Review of Existing Licenses

RLSI is responsible for amendments to an existing license. Requests may come from the foster parent, district office staff, or RLSI staff. Amendments will be approved by RLSI at the supervisory level. Decisions will be made within 30 days of the request.

Exceeding Capacity in a Family Foster Care Home

District director approval is required for requests to exceed the licensed capacity of a foster home. Requests to exceed the licensed capacity of a foster home must be made prior to placement of the child or youth. Exceeding capacity can compromise the safety and placement stability of all youth in the home. District staff must submit the FS-221C

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(Request for Regulation Variance or Capacity Change) and send it to the RLSI administrative mailbox at AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov.

RLSI may approve a request to exceed licensed capacity when:

- The placement is the result of an emergency;
- No other appropriate placement is available; and
- The home in question can accommodate the additional child(ren) without disrupting the safety and quality of care provided to children already in the home.

Centralized Intake and Emergency Services (CIES) may grant temporary emergency overcapacity requests upon receipt and evaluation of the above information. RLSI will reevaluate the request upon the next business day.

The request from district office staff to exceed capacity will contain:

- The reason for the request;
- Current status of placed children and youth in home with evidence of an assessment by their assigned worker as to the potential impact of the new placement;
- Assessment of the current capacity of the foster parents and their ability to take on the additional responsibility; and
- How long in days the overcapacity is needed.


No open-ended requests will be granted as emergency overcapacity requests; these should be requested as a change to the foster home’s permanent capacity.

The RLSI supervisor, upon receipt of the request and prior to approval, will:

- Review request within 72 hours;
- Review the current foster care file and any intervention history;
- Determine if it is necessary to send an RLSI Family Service worker for a site visit; and
- As needed, have a direct conversation with the foster parent or request additional information from the district office.

RLSI will not approve any requests that also require a regulation variance to overall capacity limits as described in regulation without a site visit and contact with the foster parent.

RLSI cannot grant overcapacity requests for district-approved unlicensed foster homes. These homes are approved by the district director specific to the placed children until

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the licensing process is complete. District directors shall not violate foster care capacity regulations when approving additional placements in unlicensed homes.

RLSI will not grant overcapacity requests when a home is under regulatory intervention, child safety intervention, or under impending revocation. See Family Services [Policy 222](#) for additional information.

Changes to Permanent Capacity

Requests for permanent increases in licensed capacity will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. All requests will be documented on the FS-221C (Request for Regulation Variance or Capacity Change) and submitted to the RLSI administrative mailbox (AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov). Amendments will be approved by RLSI at the supervisory level. Decisions will be made within 30 days of the request.

Change in Household Composition

District office staff will notify RLSI of any changes in the household composition of a family foster home (excluding the placement or removal of foster children). All requests will be documented on the FS-221D (Request to Modify a Foster Care License) and sent to the RLSI administrative mailbox (AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov). Licensees are required to do so by regulation.


RLSI will conduct necessary background and registry checks. Based on the nature of the change and the results of background checks, RLSI will determine if further licensing review and/or amendment of the license is necessary.

If the additional household member presents a danger, RLSI will notify the district office and the foster parent within 24 hours and share the required expectation regarding mitigating the danger. This may include moving placed children unless the foster parent agrees to remove the household member.

A new spouse or partner must apply as a new applicant and meet all foster care licensing requirements.

Changes to the Residence or Physical Location

Whenever possible, district office staff will notify RLSI of an anticipated change of a foster parent's residence. All notifications will be documented on the FS-221E (Foster Home Change of Residence) and sent to the RLSI administrative mailbox (AHS.DCFSDRLSIAdmin@vermont.gov). Licensees are required to notify the licensing authority per regulation.

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When a foster family moves to a new residence, an RLSI site visit must occur to evaluate the physical facility. If a foster child is in the home at the time of the foster family’s move, district office staff must visit the home within 3 business days of the child moving, complete the FS-221E, and submit it to RLSI. RLSI will assign a worker to visit the home and fully review within 30 days. If all regulations are met, RLSI will issue an amended license.

If there is no foster child in the home at the time of the move, a worker from RLSI will be assigned to complete a site visit and complete the FS-221E. If all regulations are met, RLSI will approve the issuance of an amended license.

Requests for a Parent to Reside with Child in DCF Custody

As stated in Family Services [Policy 94](#), there are times when it is beneficial for a parent of a child in DCF custody to reside in the same licensed foster home with their child. In such circumstances, the parent is considered a household member in the licensed home and the licensee is the child’s primary caregiver. RLSI must approve the arrangement before the parent joins the household. These requests are made through the FS-221G (Request for Parent to Reside with Child in DCF Custody).

Renewal of Licenses

Foster care licenses shall, at minimum, be renewed every three years. RLSI has the discretion to issue licenses that have a shorter term. Renewals are requested using the FS-221B (Renewal Application for Care of Children in DCF Custody).

Two months prior to expiration, RLSI will send a renewal application to the licensee, and request information from district offices on each family due for renewal. Upon receipt of the completed renewal application, RLSI will complete all background checks as noted above, excepting fingerprint supported background checks which will not be required at renewal if the foster home remains continuously licensed. The assigned RLSI staff will evaluate all information received:

- If the information is complete, there have been no significant changes, foster parents have been interviewed, and there is no indication of non-compliance to regulations, a renewal report is generated and up to three-year license is issued.
- If information is incomplete, or if there have been significant changes or concerns noted, RLSI staff will evaluate further to determine compliance. A site visit may occur at the discretion of the RLSI supervisor. A report is generated, and, if appropriate, a three-year license is issued.

RLSI must receive applications for renewal prior to the license expiration date for the licensee to be considered continuously licensed.

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If a foster parent closes their license in good standing but seeks to re-activate their license within 12 months of closure, the foster parent license may be re-issued (with the original term of licensure) and the licensee will be considered continuously licensed. This decision is RLSI's sole discretion.

Appendix I: Guidance for Assessing Suitability for Conditional Custodians and District-Approved Unlicensed Placements

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| <p>AREA OF ASSESSMENT</p> | <p>SAFE – Examples of placement situations determined to be safe. The division can be in support of conditional custody in these circumstances. District-approved unlicensed placements can occur.</p> | <p>FURTHER ASSESSMENT NEEDED – Examples of placement situations where a concern or risk has been identified that requires us to PAUSE and conduct a deeper assessment of the potential caregiver, household members, or circumstances before recommendations are made. This may entail gathering additional information, having further conversation with the individual/household members, and using the information to make a recommendation.</p> | <p>UNSAFE/DANGEROUS – Examples of placement situations determined to be unsafe or dangerous. The individual cannot be licensed as a foster home. District-approved unlicensed placements shall not occur. The division will oppose conditional custody in these circumstances. The person should not be used as a temporary caregiver through an out-of-home safety plan.</p> |
| <p><i>Activities or events described in the FURTHER ASSESSMENT NEEDED category are indicators of a point within someone’s life where their behavior or circumstances may have interfered with their day-to-day functioning and responsibilities. For the purposes of this assessment, the following questions need to be explored for potential caregivers and household members 16 years of age and older prior to making a recommendation or placement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What is the historical context relevant to the concerns? What was going on in the person’s life at the time that caused them to experience consequences?</i> ➤ <i>Is the behavior or circumstance that requires further assessment still active and present in the person’s life?</i> ➤ <i>Does the situation present risk? Is the situation relevant as it pertains to caring for this child (and their specific needs and vulnerabilities)?</i> ➤ <i>What has the person done since that incident or difficult time in their lives to mitigate those circumstances or behaviors? Are there protective factors?</i> | | | |
| <p>Criminal History</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No criminal history • Only civil convictions • Civil DUI convictions older than 10 years with no additional infractions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil DUI convictions within the past 10 years • Misdemeanor criminal convictions • Non-violent felony convictions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felony convictions of child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against children (including child pornography), or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide • Felony convictions of assault, battery, or a drug-related offense within the past 5 years • Current/pending charges of the crimes listed in the two bullets above • The parties or victims of a charge/conviction are related to the CHINS case (i.e., the child’s parents) |
| <p>Department of Corrections (DOC) or Parole Board Supervision</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No current/active DOC or parole board supervision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOC or parole board supervision anticipated to successfully finish in the next 6 months for crimes other than those listed in the UNSAFE/DANGEROUS category | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOC or parole board supervision for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Felony convictions of child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against children (including child pornography), or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide ○ Felony convictions of assault, battery, or a drug-related offense within the past 5 years • Active DOC or parole board supervision with violations of probation or parole (VOPs) • DOC or parole board supervision not anticipated to successfully finish in the next 6 months |

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| <p>Relief from Abuse (RFA) Orders</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No RFAs An RFA not granted by the court | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other active RFAs (both defendants and plaintiffs of RFAs) Expired RFAs (both defendants and plaintiffs of RFAs) Multiple non-granted RFAs (both defendants and plaintiffs of RFAs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defendant of an RFA order in place to protect a child or parent in the home Defendant of an RFA order in place due to active/current domestic violence |
| <p>Substantiations of Child Abuse</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No substantiations No pre-1992 findings of child abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-1992 findings of child abuse (<i>will need to request the paper record and review</i>) Substantiations eligible for expungement where the individual is expected to promptly pursue the expungement review process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious physical injury substantiation (regardless of eligibility for expungement) Adult-to-child sexual abuse substantiation (regardless of eligibility for expungement) Emotional maltreatment substantiation (regardless of eligibility for expungement) |
| <p>DCF-FSD Involvement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No open DCF-FSD case No prior adjudication in a CHINS proceeding (no CHINS findings) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open DCF-FSD (DP or UY) Recent DCF-FSD involvement Significant past DCF-FSD involvement Prior adjudication in a CHINS proceeding (CHINS findings) Foster home licensing history, including a previous foster home that was closed and flagged, revoked licenses, or denied applications (<i>will need to request review by RLSI staff</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open DCF-FSD child safety intervention (CSI), DCF custody, or CF case Situations where the individual being considered as a caregiver is unwilling to work with DCF-FSD because of their past experiences |
| <p>Residency</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have stable housing (home ownership or current lease for rental properties) Situations where relatives or others reside together with adequate living space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situations where relatives or others reside together temporarily without adequate living space Imminent plans to move into stable housing Residing in a hotel or motel on a short-term basis due to a significant event (i.e., house fire, damage from a natural disaster, moving to Vermont and looking for housing, landlord selling residence) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No identified housing; lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence Living in a place not meant for human habitation Residing in an institution, assisted living facility, correctional facility, or treatment facility Residing in a hotel or motel paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs Residing in emergency shelters Imminent risk of homelessness Current eviction notice or home foreclosure Relatives residing in another state without ICPC approval (<i>must consult and receive approval from ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator</i>) |
| <p>Home Environment</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No obvious safety hazards (including water hazards, fire hazards, unsecured firearms, or general sanitation concerns) present in the home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of apparent safety hazards (including water hazards, fire hazards, unsecured firearms, or general sanitation concerns) in the home that can be mitigated or resolved promptly (prior to placement) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obvious and significant safety hazards (including water hazards, fire hazards, unsecured firearms, or general sanitation concerns) present in the household that cannot be mitigated or resolved |

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| Substance Use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No historic substance use disorder concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained sobriety and commitment to recovery Any past substance use concerns Sanctioning event related to substance use in the past | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active substance use disorder and reliable knowledge of recent substance misuse or observation of behavioral indicators of substance use Less than one year of abstinence |
| Physical & Mental Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant health concerns that impact the ability to care for a child No significant mental health concerns that impact the ability to care for a child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical limitations associated with meeting the age and developmental needs of the child Mental health diagnosis of a mood disorder, psychotic disorder, or dissociative disorder (i.e., major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder) requires third-party verification of treatment and ability to meet child's needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnosed disability with an evaluation that has determined the individual is unable to care for children |
| Financial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered has sufficient income to support the child(ren) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered does not have sufficient income to support the child(ren) without additional support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered is experiencing significant financial instability (as indicated by inability to make payments towards rent/housing expenses, utilities, transportation, or inability to make payments against debt) Current bankruptcy |
| Relationship to Child(ren) or Youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child/youth agrees to or is in support of residing temporarily with the potential caregiver The child/youth has a strong relationship or bond to the individual The child/youth expresses no opinion about the potential caregiver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child or youth has expressed they would prefer to live with a different relative or person whom the division knows is appropriate and available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child or youth is unwilling or refuses to live with the person being considered as a caregiver The child or youth is fearful of the person being considered as a caregiver The child or youth's therapeutic needs indicate placement with this individual is not in their best interests |
| Collaboration <i>(willingness & ability to work with parents, DCF-FSD, and/or the court)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered as a caregiver has demonstrated or indicates that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will work with parents, DCF-FSD, and court partners; Will follow court orders, including coordinating and monitoring family time; & Will provide transportation to school, extracurricular activities, medical appointments, therapy, family time, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered has refused to work with DCF-FSD in the past The ability to provide transportation may be a limitation or barrier Relationship dynamics where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual's opinions or behaviors towards or about the parents may impact reunification efforts or the safety of the child(ren); or The parent's opinions or behaviors towards or about the individual being considered as a caregiver may impact reunification efforts or the safety of the child(ren) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered as a caregiver openly refuses or is unable to work with the parents, DCF-FSD, or court partners |