Homefinding Policy

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
Bureau for Children and Families
Office of Children and Adult Services
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Homefinding 1

Policy 1

14.1 Community Awareness/Recruitment Standards 6

Multiethnic Placement Act 6

Developmental Disabilities 8

General Recruitment 8

Child Specific Recruitment 10

14.2 Foster/Adoptive Family Provider Certification Process 12

Initial Inquiry 12

Pre-Service Orientation/Pre-Service Training 14

Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Eligibility Criteria 18

General 18

Capacity 19

Health Status 19

Financial/Economic Status, Employment & Child Care 21

Community/Support Services 21

Home Safety Environment 21

Bathrooms/Bedrooms 24

Food/Nutrition 25

Transportation/Car Safety 25

Discipline/Supervision 25

Medical Care and First Aid 27

14.3 Provider Information Exchange 28

14.4 Family Assessment Process 29

Application 31

Home Assessment 32

Interviews 34

References 35

Criminal Records Check 36

Child/Adult Protective Services Records Check 40

14.5 Contracted Home Studies/ASO Protocol 40

14.6 Kinship/Relative Homestudies 42

14.7 Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) Home Studies 46

14.8 Waivers 49

14.9 Evaluation 50

14.10 Home Study Approval/Provider Opening 51

14.11 Home Study Denial 52

14.12 Respite Providers 53

14.13 Referral and Placement Process 56

Referral Process 56

Placement 57

14.14 Supports for Foster/Adoptive Families 59

Foster/Adoptive Parent Associations 59

FACTS Plus 60

14.15 Non-Compliance/Corrective Action 61

14.16 Investigations of Allegations of Abuse and/or Neglect in 63

Foster/Adoptive Family Homes 63

14.17 Foster/Adoptive Family Grievances 66

14.18 Post Approval Contact/Supervision 67

14.19 Recertification 73

14.20 In Service Training 75

14.21 Dual Providers 76

14.22 Department Employees as Providers 77

14.23 Employees with Licensed Child Placing Agencies as 78

Providers 78

14.24 Liability Insurance 80

General Liability Insurance 80
Property Insurance 80
14.25 Changes of Address/Moves 81
Moves within the State 81
Moves Out of State 81
14.26 Rights & Responsibilities of Foster/Adoptive Parents 82
Responsibilities to the Child 82
Confidentiality 83
Allowance and Income 84
Savings Accounts for Foster Children 84
Clothing/Child's Personal Effects 84
Religious and Ethnic Heritage 85
Medical Care 86
Education 86
Consents 87
Recreation and Community 87
Supporting the Child during Reunification/Moves 87
Record Keeping 87
Transportation 88
Prudent Parenting 88
Responsibilities to the Child's Family 90
Responsibilities to the Department 90
Training 91
Involvement in Service Planning and Delivery 91
14.27 Foster/Adoptive Parents Expectations of the Department 92
14.28 Runaway, Missing, or Abducted Children 93
14.29 Denials and Closures of Homes 94
Foster/Adoptive Parent Requests Termination 94
Closure of Approved Homes 95
Closure - Failure to Meet Annual Training Requirements 96

14.30 Payments/Rates 96

Boarding Care Corrections 97

Burial Expenses 98

Child Care 98

Initial Clothing Payment 99

Supplemental and Replacement Clothing 100

Continuing Education 101

Court Costs/Legal Advertising 102

Foster Care Supplement/Special Rate 102

Health Examination - Foster/Adoptive Parent 103

In-Service Training 103

Respite Care Payment 103

School Clothing Allowance 103

Transportation of Foster Children 104

Tutoring 104

Water Testing 105

Review of Payments and Licensing Standards 105

14.1 Community Awareness/Recruitment Standards

Federal regulations require states to provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster/adoptive families to care for the children in the custody of the Department. Recruitment efforts to find foster/adoptive families and community awareness of the adoption and foster care programs shall be the primary responsibility of the Regional Homefinding staff.

The recruitment of families to care for children and youth is a complex process. It is often the first time to make an impression made on prospective foster/adoptive parents. It involves the assessment of a variety of factors to develop an effective recruitment strategy. Recruitment efforts shall be designed to provide to potential foster/adoptive parents throughout the community with honest information about the characteristics and needs of the available children in foster care, the nature of the foster care and adoption processes, and the supports available to foster/adoptive families. In addition, efforts must be made to increase general awareness of foster/adoptive parenting and to create interest in and support for caring for the specific children served by the agency.

Multiethnic Placement Act

The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996 require states to develop recruitment plans that provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster/adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. Both general and targeted recruitment should be used to meet this requirement. When using targeted recruitment, a state must insure that the children being recruited for are also included in the state's general recruitment activities.

Since West Virginia, along with the nation as a whole, has a disproportionate number of African-American children in the foster care program, careful attention must be given to recruiting families that mirror the ethnic and racial makeup of children in the state’s custody. Experience demonstrates that minority communities respond when they are given information about the need for homes and when they are treated with respect. Recruitment planning must focus on developing a pool of potential foster/adoptive parents willing and able to foster/adopt the children needing placement. Recruitment must seek to provide all children with the opportunity for placement and to provide all qualified members of the community with an opportunity to foster/adopt a child.

Federal regulations specify that appropriate comprehensive recruitment plans must include the following:

- A description of the characteristics of waiting children;
- Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community;
- Diverse methods of disseminating both general and child specific information;
- Strategies for assuring that all prospective parents have timely access to the homestudy process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access by all members of the community;
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial and economic communities;
- Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers;
- Non-discriminatory fee structures; and
- Procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a waiting child, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures must ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

In addition to the above diligent recruitment requirements, the Multiethnic Placement Act also has specific provisions for states and all entities that receives funds from the Federal Government and are involved in adoption or foster care placement, including licensed child placing agencies.

No applicant will be delayed or denied the opportunity to become a foster/adoptive parent because of the race, color, ethnicity, or national origin of the prospective parent or the individual child to be placed in the home. No placement of a child will be delayed or denied based on the race, color, ethnicity, or national origin of the foster/adoptive parent or of the child involved.

The Department has partnered with Mission West Virginia to develop a One Church-One Child program throughout the state to recruit prospective African- American and other families to foster/adopt children in the custody of the state. Mission West Virginia has also developed a program which is aimed at recruiting foster/adoptive families for specific children under the Department's care. While the ongoing program responsibility for One Church-One Child will be held by Mission West Virginia and the Children and Adult Services State Office staff, Mission West Virginia and Homefinding staff will have direct contact with the churches who will participate in the program. This contact will include making presentations to individual churches,

providing congregations with materials if necessary and case work responsibilities with those families who have been recruited through the program.

In addition to working with churches, Homefinding staff must explore other avenues to interest African-American families in foster/adoptive care. These sources may include advertising on radio stations, targeting African-American business leaders and service organizations in the community, placing ads in weekly community newspapers, etc. Homefinding staff must be creative in recruiting families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster/adoptive homes are needed

Developmental Disabilities

The Department has also agreed to work with the developmental disabilities community to target recruitment efforts for children in foster care who have developmental disabilities and are awaiting a permanent placement. While the Division of Children and Adult Service will partner with the University Affiliated Center for Developmental Disabilities and the state Developmental Disabilities Council, it is important for Homefinding staff to plan recruitment activities targeted to finding permanent families for foster children with developmental disabilities. Recruitment strategies that may be used in these efforts include those that honestly reflect the needs of the population of children with developmental disabilities in need of adoption; develop recruitment strategies in partnership with families who have already adopted children with mild-to-severe developmental disabilities; and work directly with the Specialized Family Care Program to recruit families who are not only willing to provide substitute care to these children but are also willing to become permanent families.

General Recruitment

General recruitment techniques may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Decals

Slogans or themes on bookmarks, pencils, balloons, key chains, t- shirts, fans, etc.

Displays

Information booths

Placemats in restaurants

Flyers, brochures, posters, handouts, and bill inserts

Notices in congregational and community bulletins

Calendars

Newsletters

Speakers' bureaus, scheduling presentations

Award programs

Welcome wagon packets

Drop-ins or open houses

Television and newspaper feature stories

Television public service announcements or community interest stories

Interview programs

Radio spot announcements

Direct mailing and ad coupons

Display ads in phone books

Recruitment films

Messages on business marquees

Adoption day in court

Foster/adoptive family's recognition/appreciation celebrations

All general recruitment materials must state that children in the custody of the Department have at least one of the following special needs:

They may be eight (8) years of age or older;

Are members of a sibling group to be placed together;

Are members of a racial or ethnic minority; and/or

Have developmental, physical, emotional, or behavioral problems

Recruitment materials must also have a direct contact number for those interested to call to get more information about becoming a foster/adoptive family. In addition, all general recruitment materials must be focused on foster/adoptive parenting.

One final form of recruitment that is one of the most effective is word of mouth. Prospective and present foster/adoptive parents are often the key to successful recruitment plans. Word of mouth is a powerful tool as a prospective foster/adoptive parent may or may not respond to recruitment efforts depending on what they hear from others that have had contact with the Department. Department policies, procedures, and ways of engaging inquiring families and veteran families set the tone for this natural means of recruitment. The internal organization must be consumer friendly and everyone from the Secretary to field staff must be foster/adoptive parent friendly. Parents need to be rewarded, respected, and most of all, their opinions need to be heard and valued. A family that has been pleased with the service it received from the Department will let others know of their positive experience. Many potential resource families contact the Department because their friend, neighbor, or a relative is a foster/adoptive parent with or adopted through the Department.

Child Specific Recruitment

Child specific recruitment must be done for every child who has at least one parent's rights terminated and adoption is the child's permanency plan. These children must be included in the following unless the requirements under section 6.21 of the Adoption Policy have been met:

Featured on the Division of Children and Adult Services Adoption Resource Network Internal Database, when one parent's rights have been terminated; and

Featured on the Division of Children and Adult Services West Virginia Adoption Website and the AdoptUSKids website, when both parent's rights have been terminated.

Child specific recruitment materials must have the following information clearly described:

- Age of the child;
- Gender of the child;

- Membership in a sibling group, if applicable;
- Culture and ethnicity;
- Special developmental, behavioral or medical needs of the child;
- Child's attitudes, habits, and daily routines;
- Positive characteristics such as hobbies, sports, likes, etc. of the child;

and

Recruitment materials must also have a direct contact number for those interested to call to get more information about becoming a foster/adoptive family.

In addition, the following child specific recruitment techniques may be utilized:

- Child of the month flyers;
- Television news program features such as Child Watch and Wednesday's Child, and/or;
- Newspaper feature stories such as Sunday's Child.
- Mission West Virginia's child specific recruitment program which is aimed at recruiting foster/adoptive families for specific children under the Department's care.

Methods of disseminating both general and targeted recruitment information should utilize mass media and printed materials. Newspapers, including dailies and neighborhood weeklies, television, and radio should be utilized by Homefinding staff for feature articles and spots as well as advertisements, press releases, public service announcements, letters to the editors, talk shows, etc. Printed materials such as brochures, posters, flyers, etc. may be developed for distribution through churches, clubs, other community organizations, doctors' offices, hospital and clinic waiting rooms, libraries, college and university information centers, beauty parlors, community centers, and many other local bulletin boards.

The Homefinding Specialist will do the following:

Each Homefinding Specialist will develop a monthly recruitment calendar that lists at least two (2) recruitment activities per month.

If printed materials such as brochures, flyers, etc. are being used, if they were not developed by the Division of Children and Adult Services, they must be approved by the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant and approved by the Office of Communications.

If newsletters or newspaper articles are being used, they must be reviewed by the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant and approved by the Office of Communications.

14.2 Foster/Adoptive Family Provider Certification Process

Initial Inquiry

The initial contact of a prospective foster/adoptive parent is very important. It is essential that the person who takes the initial inquiry about foster/adoptive parenting be courteous and able to provide general information about the program. Inquiries may come through a variety of sources including direct phone calls or letters to the local offices, contacts with the Division of Children and Adult Services, the state's web page, the National Adoption Center, or various toll free lines set up by the state.

When a potential provider makes an inquiry the following will occur:

1. The worker receiving the initial inquiry about foster/adoptive care will complete the initial inquiry in FACTS as an Information and Referral. The information that must be taken during the initial inquiry shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

    - Name
    - Address
    - Other people living in the home
    - Birth date of all individuals in the home
    - Specific child characteristics the prospective family is interested in
    - Referral source

2. Families interested in adoption only of a young child under the age of five (5) years, without special needs, shall be referred to a licensed adoption agency in their area. The person receiving the initial inquiry will inform the interested person that the Department only has children available for placement who have special needs.

3. The Homefinding Supervisor will determine if the individual is a new inquiry, a re-application from a voluntarily closed home, or a re-application from an involuntarily closed home.

4. If the foster home or foster/adoptive home was involuntarily closed for failure to meet one of the general requirements, the Homefinding Supervisor should discuss the inquiry with the evaluation team to determine if the inquiry should be refused or allowed to proceed with the process.

5. If the inquiry is from an involuntarily closed foster home or foster/adoptive home that was closed for a reason other than the failure to meet one of the general requirements, the Homefinding Supervisor will refuse the inquiry. If the referral is denied, the applicant must be informed of the grievance process. ***Refer to the Common Chapter Manual, Section 720, Subpart B for the process and instructions.**

6. If the former foster home or foster/adoptive home was voluntarily closed on a voluntary basis and is in good standing with the Department, with no substantiated IIU investigations, the foster/adoptive parent(s) may be reopened without repeating the certification process if they have had two or more years of fostering experience with at least one child and have no current out of home placement of their own adopted or legal guardianship children. However, they must complete the fingerprinting process again; have an updated homestudy and walkthrough/safety check of the home as well as updated CPR/First Aid certification and current CIB/NCIC report. The Department will determine and address any training needs within the first 12 months of reopening the foster home.

7. The Homefinding Supervisor will assign the inquiry to a Homefinding Specialist within five (5) business days to contact the former foster home or foster/adoptive home to ensure that the family is aware of the new changes in policies and procedures and to obtain the letter to become reinstated.

8. The Homefinding Specialist will mail a packet of information about the foster/adoptive care program within five (5) business days to the individual inquiring to provide services. The packet will include:

   - A copy of the Homefinding Information Bulletin Booklet
   - The Process to Become a Foster/Adoptive Parent
   - Rights and Responsibilities of Foster/Adoptive Parents
   - Application

9. The Homefinding Specialist will follow up with the prospective family within ten (10) business days from the date the information packet was mailed. This contact may be by telephone, letter, or the Homefinding Specialist may arrange for a home visit or office visit. The Homefinding Specialist will provide general information about the requirements for being a foster/adoptive family and the process for becoming certified as a foster/adoptive parent.

10. The Homefinding Specialist will invite (by written invitation) the prospective family to the next available Pre-Service Orientation session during the follow-up.

11. The Homefinding Specialist will update FACTS with the following information:

    - Date the information packet was mailed,
    - Name of the Homefinding Specialist receiving the inquiry,
    - Date the Homefinding Specialist received the inquiry, and
    - Date the prospective family attended Pre-Service Orientation meeting.

A potential provider must complete the application before they can begin the rest of the homestudy process. Once the Homefinding Unit receives the application from a potential provider, a Homefinder is required to enter a Request to Provide in FACTS within seventy-two (72) hours. From the time that the Request to Provide is entered in FACTS, the entire homestudy process should take no longer than twelve (12) months to complete.

Pre-Service Orientation/Pre-Service Training

The purpose of Pre-Service Orientation/Pre-Service Training is to give interested persons an opportunity to learn more about the foster/adoptive family program of the Department and to decide if they wish to continue with the application process. The Pre-Service Orientation and Pre-Service Training sessions are held as a group process which provides prospective parents the chance to learn from each other. The goals of the Pre-Service Orientation and Pre-Service Training meetings are:

To orient the applicants to the philosophy and process of the Department's foster/adoptive care programs;

To develop greater self-awareness on the part of the applicants to determine their strengths, weaknesses, emotional status, and personality characteristics;

To prepare applicants by sensitizing them to the kinds of situations, feelings, and reactions that is apt to occur with placements;

To effect behavior so that applicants will better fulfill the function of their role as parents of foster/adoptive children; and

To allow the Homefinding staff to begin the family assessment process.

Families who attend Pre-Service Orientation and Pre-Service Training are not obligating themselves to accept a child nor is the Department obligating itself to certify a prospective applicant for foster/adoptive care. When a couple applies to become foster/adoptive parents, each prospective parent must attend all the Pre-Service Orientation and Pre-Service Training sessions; in the order they are offered.

The Department utilizes the **Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education** (PRIDE) model for developing and supporting foster/adoptive families. All foster/adoptive parents must be trained by utilizing the PRIDE training model unless a waiver is issued for kinship/relative providers. Waivers will be determined on a case-by-case basis. If a kinship/relative home wishes to adopt the child that has been placed in their home, and they have been granted a training/home study waiver, the Kinship/Relative Safety Screen may be used along with a placement status update to present to the court to show that the placement has been approved and certified. Foster/adoptive parents will be reviewed annually on the PRIDE competencies, so it will be necessary for all foster/adoptive parents to fully understand the PRIDE model.

The PRIDE program is designed to strengthen the quality of family foster/adoptive care and services by providing a standardized, consistent, structured framework for the competency-based recruitment, preparation, and selection of foster/adoptive parents, and for foster/adoptive parent in-service training and ongoing professional development. Integral to the components of the PRIDE training the belief that protecting and nurturing children at risk and strengthening all their families (birth, kinship, foster, adoptive) requires teamwork among individuals with diverse knowledge and skills, but all working from a shared vision and toward a common goal.

The Pre-Service Orientation and Pre-Service Training will consist of the following ten (10) units, all of which must be completed by each and every prospective foster/adoptive parent in a sequential order:

Pre-Service Orientation- Department of Health and Human Resources Policy and Practice

Connecting with PRIDE

Teamwork toward Permanence

Meeting Developmental Needs: Attachment

Meeting Developmental Needs: Loss

Strengthening Family Relationships

Meeting Developmental Needs: Discipline

Continuing Family Relationships

Planning for change

Taking PRIDE: Making an Informed Decision (Panel Discussion)

The following will occur:

The Schools of Social Work will work with the Homefinding staff to develop the Pre-Service PRIDE Training sessions and provide a list of Pre-Service training dates that have been scheduled by the Social Work Education Consortium (SWEC) staff to the Homefinding staff.

Once the Homefinding Supervisor obtains the Pre-Service Orientation and Training calendar from the Schools of Social Work for the Region, they will add this information to the Adoption Calendar that is located on the BCF website.

The Homefinding Specialist will notify all prospective families who have made an inquiry concerning becoming a foster/adoptive parent about the availability of Pre-Service Orientation/Training in writing.

If the prospective parent decides not to attend the next available session of Pre-Service Orientation/Training, the Homefinding Specialist will continue to send notices of all sessions of Pre-Service Orientation/Training within the Region for the next (6) six months. At the end of (6) six months, the person who inquired about

becoming a foster/adoptive parent but did not attend any of the Pre-Service Orientation/Training sessions will have their inquiry closed.

The Homefinding Specialist will facilitate and attend the Pre-Service Orientation- Department of Health and Human Resources Policy and Practice session, which is the first session of the PRIDE training. During this orientation session, prospective foster/adoptive parents will be provided information on the Department's program provisions, policies, legal requirements, child care regulations, and training and certificate requirements, including first aid and CPR training. The Homefinding Specialist will train the applicants in attendance on prudent parenting and away from supervision using the Department-approved curriculums. The Homefinding Specialist will distribute all necessary paperwork for application on becoming a foster/adoptive parent, such as the Application, Medical Examination Form, Reference Forms and Release of Information Forms. The Homefinding Specialist will complete all necessary CIB/NCID fingerprinting on each participant, during this session.

Once the Homefinding Specialist has completed the necessary fingerprinting process on an applicant, the request to provide service inquiry must be opened as an unavailable foster care provider record in FACTS, so the background check can be completed.

The Homefinding Specialist will document the date the above information was given to the applicant in the foster care provider's FACTS record under the Contacts screen.

At session six (6) of PRIDE Pre-Service Orientation/Training, the Homefinding Specialist will attend the session to observe and/or answer questions pertaining to the Department's discipline policy. The Homefinding Specialist will make sure that all prospective foster/adoptive parents have completed the fingerprinting for the Criminal Background check to be submitted to the State Police, prior to the session ending.

The Homefinding Specialist will attend the last session of the Pre-Service Orientation/Training. During this session a panel discussion will be utilized to provide the prospective foster/adoptive parents with a variety of different individuals who are involved in the foster care system. The Homefinding Specialist will assist the Schools of Social Work is scheduling participants for the panel discussion. The Homefinding Specialist will collect all necessary paperwork from each prospective foster/adoptive parent, to continue the application process,

including the Application, Release of Information Form, References and any missed CIB Fingerprints. The Homefinding Specialist will collect all necessary paperwork from the trainer, such as the trainer notes on each prospective foster/adoptive parent and a list of prospective foster/adoptive parents. The Homefinding Specialist will document the date the information was received back from the prospective foster/adoptive parent in FACTS.

If the person who inquired informs the Homefinding Specialist that he/she chooses not to complete Pre-Service Orientation/Training or to not continue with the process, at any time, the Homefinding Specialist must inform the person who inquired that if he/she wishes to pursue foster/adoptive parenting, he/she will need to make another inquiry. The Homefinding Specialist will document this on the Intake screens in FACTS.

Upon successful completion of the Pre-Service Orientation/Training, all prospective foster/adoptive parents will be provided a Certificate of Achievement by the PRIDE Trainer. A copy of this certificate will be provided to the Homefinding Specialist by the Pride Trainer to be maintained in the prospective foster/adoptive parent's record and documented in FACTS in Document Tracking.

After prospective foster/adoptive parent(s) have completed the PRIDE Pre-Service Orientation/Training, they will not have to re-do the training as long as their home remains certified as a foster/adoptive home.

*After prospective foster/adoptive parent(s) have completed the PRIDE Pre- Service Orientation/Training, they do not have to re-do the training within a three (3) year time period, if they choose to become certified at a later date.

Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Eligibility Criteria

In order to become a foster/ adoptive parent, the applicant must meet the following eligibility criteria.

General

1. The applicant must be at least eighteen (18) years of age or older at the time of application.
2. Applicants must be nurturing, responsible, patient, stable, flexible, mature, healthy adults capable of meeting the individual needs of children referred for placement services.
3. A couple who wish to be foster/adoptive parents must demonstrate that

their relationship will provide an environment of stability for children.

4. The decision to become a foster/adoptive parent shall be agreed to by all members of the household, including other children in the home over the age of twelve (12).
5. The prospective foster/adoptive parent must be willing and able to accept the level of involvement and supervision provided by the Department and/or specialized foster care agency for children placed in their home.
6. The prospective foster/adoptive parent must be a United States citizen and a resident of West Virginia.
7. The prospective foster/adoptive parent may not function as a day care provider, adult family care provider, specialized foster/adoptive parent, or any other social service provider without prior approval of the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant.

Capacity

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall accept children for foster care only from the Department of Health and Human Resources unless they are dual providers sanctioned by the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant under specific circumstances.
2. The number of children placed in a home shall be determined by the stamina, capacities, skills of the parents, physical accommodations of the home, and the effect of a child's placement on the equilibrium of the family as a unit. No more than six (6) children, including the foster children, and the foster/adoptive parents' own children, or any other children under the age of eighteen (18) living at home shall reside in the foster home at any given time. The only exception may be for the placement of a sibling group with the prior approval of the Homefinding Supervisor who will then notify the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant by the next working day.
3. No more than two (2) children under the age of two (2) are to be placed in a foster home at the same time.
4. No more than two (2) children who are medically fragile or non-ambulatory shall reside in a foster home at the same time.

Health Status

The prospective foster/adoptive parents, as well as all other household members, must possess good physical health, be free from communicable diseases, specific illnesses or disabilities which interfere with the family's capability to care for foster/adoptive children. All household members must have had a tuberculin risk

assessment or skin test within the first year of the certification process. When TB results are positive, documentation of a physician's recommended follow-up must be on file. Each applicant must have had a physical exam, within (1) one year of the homestudy process, performed by a physician that assures that the physical health of the foster/adoptive parent is appropriate to care for a foster/adopted child. All approved foster/adoptive parents must have a follow up medical examination and TB risk assessment at least every five (5) years, but one may be requested by the Homefinding Specialist when deemed necessary.

The prospective foster/adoptive parent, as well as all other household members, must be up-to-date on their immunizations. The Homefinding Specialist must be able to verify that each individual has received the current immunizations recommended for the respective ages by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices from the Center for Disease Control.

The prospective foster/adoptive parent, as well as all other household members, must be of sound mental health. A foster or adoptive parent currently in therapy shall provide a signed statement from the therapist indicating that he or she is capable of providing appropriate child care. An agency shall not approve foster and adoptive parents whose health, behavior, emotional or psychological make-up may endanger the well-being of a child. If any of these factors arise to the level of a safety concern or endangerment to the child, during the process, after the home has been approved, or anytime during the placement, then the agency shall develop and implement a procedure for the immediate removal of a child in the placement.

If a prospective foster/adoptive parent has a long history/record of mental health or substance abuse issues or problems, then the Homefinding specialist should request a psychological evaluation or substance abuse evaluation. Or, if the Homefinding Specialist feels that a psychological evaluation or substance abuse assessment is necessary to determine the parent's ability to provide services, due to the prospective foster/adoptive parent's behaviors during the home study process, they may request a psychological evaluation or substance abuse assessment. The Homefinding Specialist will request approval to obtain the psychological from the Homefinding Supervisor and Regional Program Manager. The Homefinding Specialist will request the prospective foster/adoptive parent(s) sign a release of information permitting the Department to obtain the psychological evaluation or substance abuse assessment. The psychological evaluation request must address the specific concerns or issues that the Homefinding Specialist has identified. If the prospective foster/adoptive parent(s) have private insurance, it should be utilized

to cover the expense of the evaluations. If the Department must cover the expenses of the evaluations, the payment for these evaluations will be made at the Medicaid rate. The information gathered from these evaluations or assessments will then be used to determine the emotional well-being of the individual and his/her ability to care for a foster/adoptive child.

Financial/Economic Status, Employment & Child Care

1. The applicant must have adequate financial resources to provide a reasonable standard of living for his/her family's needs and to insure the financial stability of the family unit. The prospective foster/adoptive parent will provide adequate information to make the determination of financial stability. This may include copies of tax returns, check stubs, copies of monthly bills, etc.
2. Unless the applicant provides a release of information, the Department may not search any records held by any other Office or Bureau of the Department.
3. Couples in which both parents are employed outside the home shall not be excluded from consideration as foster/adoptive parents.
4. Child care arrangements made by foster/adoptive parents must be evaluated as part of the home assessment and approved by the Homefinding Specialist.

Community/Support Services

1. The prospective foster/adoptive family must have access to schools, recreational activities, medical care, and other community facilities.
2. Recreational opportunities, suited to the interest and capacity of the individual child placed in the home, shall be provided by the family and outdoor place space and suitable recreational equipment, toys, books, etc., must be available to the individual child.
3. The prospective foster/adoptive family must have support services available to the family such as community resources available to help the foster/adopted child with his or her development, individuals able to provide the family with necessary respite, transportation, etc,

Home Safety Environment

1. The use of mobile homes will be limited to those manufactured after 1976. In addition, all mobile homes must be equipped with push out window frames that are the type of sash/windows that rise up and can be used as an emergency exit.

2. All homes must have screens on all windows that open and have at least two exits that can be used for emergency exits.
3. A battery operated smoke alarm must be located near each bedroom and in the kitchen area.
4. The house must be equipped with a battery operated carbon monoxide detector, unless everything in the home is generated by electric.
5. A useable portable five (5) lb. or larger ABC Certified fire extinguisher must be located in or near the kitchen of the home.
6. An operative flashlight must be easily accessible for emergency lighting.
7. A home diagram must be made identifying rooms and occupants that reflects a fire escape plan, escape route, and an outside meeting place.
8. Each child must be taken through the fire escape route within twenty-four (24) hours of placement.
9. If the child's bedroom is located on an upper floor of the house, it must have a fire escape ladder available for emergency exits.
10. If a garage is attached to the house, it must be separated from the house by a tight fitting door which is kept closed, when necessary, to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the home.
11. The home must be in good repair and free from any visible dangers to children. (This includes the walls, ceilings, floors, stairs, wiring fixtures, plumbing fixtures, porches, appliances, etc…)
12. Furniture, carpets and accessories shall be sanitary, in good condition, comfortable and free from odors.
13. Heat sources such as fireplaces, furnaces, stoves, radiators, water heaters, and other heaters must have safeguards including thermostatic controls, automatic shut off valves, vents, and screens that are functioning, when required on the heat source.
14. Walls, ceilings and floors, must be adequately protected from heating and cooking equipment by sufficient clearance or noncombustible insulation. Areas near the chimney, furnace, water heater and stove must be free from items that could catch fire.
15. Ashes from burning coal or wood must be kept in a metal container clear of wood floors and walls. The exhaust pipes for wood stoves, fireplaces and coal-burning stoves must be maintained to keep them free of creosote.
16. Makeshift heating or cooking devices such as charcoal grills, camping stoves, kerosene heaters, etc. which could cause carbon monoxide poising or other accidents may not be used indoors.
17. Extension cords must be used properly.
18. Electrical circuits must be protected by a maximum twenty (20) amp fuse or circuit breaker.
19. All household items that may be hazardous to a child must be stored in unbreakable, clearly labeled containers out of the reach of children. This includes household cleaning supplies, gasoline, pesticides, weed killers, etc.

Medicines will be stored in areas that are inaccessible to children. Alcoholic beverages should be properly placed out of the reach of children who do not have the capacity to understand the difference between alcohol and appropriate beverages, to avoid accidental ingestion.

20. All weapons must be kept properly stored in a locked container inaccessible to children, preferably one made out of solid wood or metal. If a glass case is utilized to store firearms, trigger locks must be used on all firearms. Ammunition and all other weapons including knives, throwing stars, etc. shall also be stored in a separate locked container out of reach of children. The following are considered weapons: firearms, air guns, BB guns, Hunting slingshots, and any other projectile weapon;
21. All ammunition, arrows or projectiles for these weapons must be stored in a locked space separate from the weapons;
22. Foster/Adoptive Parents who are law enforcement, may be exempt from these requirements if the can:
23. Provide documentation of their jurisdiction's requirement to have their weapon ready and immediately accessible at all times;
24. Adopt and follow a safety plan that is approved by the agency.
25. The home must have an appropriate supply of water, including an adequate supply of hot water to sanitize cooking and eating utensils.
26. If drinking water is supplied by means other than a municipal water supply, it must be evaluated and approved safe by the local Department/Division of Health or by an objective, independent facility capable of making such distinctions.
27. Liquid waste shall be disposed of in a sanitary manner into a septic system. Septic systems must appear to be in good working order with no standing ground water that appears to be leaking from the system or no strong odor of sewage around the home. If there appears to be a sewage or septic problem, the system should be checked.
28. Garbage and trash shall be collected and disposed of in compliance with established standards of the Department's Division of Health.
29. All pets kept at the home must have proof of vaccination/certification which is required by West Virginia Code §19-20A-2. If the animal is sickly or vicious, it must be confined in an area not accessible to children. Children will be instructed in the proper care methods before they are allowed to handle or care for an animal. All children must be carefully supervised when handling or caring for an animal.
30. The home must have a working telephone for communication in case of an emergency.
31. Decks and porches eighteen inches (18") from the ground or higher must have appropriate enclosures/railing around the parameter of the deck to keep a child from falling from the deck/porch. The area below the deck must be enclosed with wire mesh or wood lattice, unless there is useable living space below the deck.

32. If the home has an in ground or stationary above ground pool, it must be enclosed by a fence that has a locking gate, door and/or ladder to prevent unsupervised access to the pool by children. If the home has a decorative pond or kiddy/wading/blow-up type pool the family must take measures to prevent unsupervised access to the pond/pool by the children.

Bathrooms/Bedrooms

1. Bathrooms must have windows and/or fans for ventilation.
2. Bathrooms shall be easily accessible and equipped to meet the needs of the foster child placed in the home.
3. Bathrooms shall be clean and toilet and bathing facilities shall be free from odors and in good working order.
4. Bathrooms must have doors for privacy.
5. Children shall not be housed in unapproved rooms or detached buildings.
6. Each individual bedroom must have a window to the outside and a door.
7. Attic or basement bedrooms must meet the same standards as all bedrooms in the home.
8. A child's bedroom must not be used for any other purpose by any other member of the household. The home shall have enough bedrooms to allow sufficient living space without disrupting the living arrangements of the family. *Rooms not designated as bedrooms shall not be used for sleeping purposes on a continuous basis.
9. No more than four (4) children, including the foster/adoptive parents own children, may share a bedroom. All children sharing a bedroom will be of the same sex.
10. Each child shall have his own bed with appropriate mattresses and linens. All children, except for children under two (2) years of age, must have space for their personal possessions and a reasonable degree of privacy.
11. Folding cots, roll-away beds, inflatable mattresses, or mattresses on the floor are not permitted. In an emergency, a waiver may be requested through the Homefinding Specialist and will be time limited.
12. The bedroom of an individual with a physical disability shall be within easy access of a responsible person who can provide care when needed. In some instances, the individual child's bedroom may need to be located on the ground level and/or the same floor as the bathroom.
13. Each infant shall have a crib that meets federal standards for sleeping. At no time will infants share a bed with an adult; they must have their own crib. Foster parents will receive instruction on Safe Sleep during in-service training.
14. Adults should not share a bedroom with a child. Exceptions may be made for children under the age of two (2) years or for children who are medically fragile.

Food/Nutrition

1. Adequate food shall be provided to meet the nutritional requirements of the child according to his age and activity. Meals shall be well balanced and prepared with consideration for any prescribed special dietary requirements/needs.
2. Food preference of the child shall be taken into consideration without sacrificing good nutrition.
3. Food shall be stored in such a manner as to be free from contamination.
4. Sinks and surrounding kitchen area shall be clean and free from odors and all major appliances shall be in good working order.

Transportation/Car Safety

1. The safest place for any child twelve (12) years old and under is in the backseat.
2. Infants up to twenty (20) pounds and up to one (1) year old should ride in a rear-facing child seat. The child seat must be in the back seat and face the rear of the car, van, or truck. Babies riding in a car must never face front. In a crash or sudden stop, the baby's neck can be hurt badly. Infants in car seats must never ride in the front seat of a car with air bags. In a crash, the air bag can hit the car seat and hurt or kill the baby. Never hold a baby or allow a baby to be held when riding a car. In a crash or sudden stop, the child could be hurt badly or killed.
3. Children over twenty (20) pounds and at least one (1) year old should ride in a car seat that faces the front of the car, van or truck. It is best to keep children in the forward facing car seat for as long as they fit comfortably in it.
4. Older children up to the age of eight (8) years old should ride in a booster seat that meets the Federal Vehicle Safety Standards. If a child is under the age of eight (8) years old and at least four (4) foot, nine (9) inches tall, they may be secured in the vehicle with the car's safety belt system. A car safety belt must fit low and snug on the child's hips. The safety belt must not cross the child's face or neck. Never put the shoulder belt behind the child's back or under their arm.

Discipline/Supervision

1. Punishments of a physical nature, including hitting on the body in any manner, or any punishment that subjects a child to verbal abuse, ridicule, humiliation, shaming, disgracing, belittling, intimidation or destroying a child's

sense of self-worth, including any remarks made about the child's biological parents or family, is strictly prohibited.

2. Punishments involving denying food, clothing, shelter, or bedding; keeping the child out of school; locking the child in any enclosed space; administering medication not prescribed to the child; or withholding a program service or provision outlined in the service plan, is strictly prohibited.
3. Children shall be disciplined by foster/adoptive parents with kindness and understanding.
4. Foster/adoptive parents shall use disciplinary measures designed to and carried out in such a way as to help a child develop self-control and to assume responsibility for his own actions.
5. Simple understandable rules shall be established by the foster/adoptive parents. These rules shall set forth specific expectations for behavior and the reward for appropriate behavior.
6. Discipline shall be related to the developmental stage of the child and in line with the child's abilities to comply.
7. Discipline shall be related to the child's action, handled without bias and without prolonged delay on the part of the foster/adoptive parent. The child shall be aware of the relationship of the act to its consequences.
8. The child may be given a time out for a short period of time, if necessary, to help him regain control. When possible, children should help set time limits. It is recommended that time limits be determined by the child's age and applying time out for one minute for each year of age of the child.
9. Behavior problems shall be treated individually and privately. If there is an assessment of a child's pattern of unacceptable behavior, the foster/adoptive parents should be involved and cooperate in carrying out the specific behavior modification plan for the child.
10. Denial of mail, phone calls, and/or visits with family members will not be used as a disciplinary measure. Nor will the threat of removal from the home be used as a disciplinary measure.
11. Foster/adoptive parents are not to use or permit the use of any form of physical restraint of a child in their care. Use of restraints, except for placing a child in a chair for feeding or transportation is strictly forbidden.
12. Each foster child must be supervised at all times unless the child is of an age and developmental ability to be left unsupervised. The child's worker will participate in the decision to leave the child unsupervised. No child under the age of thirteen (13) shall be left unsupervised.
13. Children must be closely supervised by an adult when participating in activities such as hunting, swimming, jumping on a trampoline, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, etc. Children of any age or with a developmental disability who lack the ability to parent themselves, must not be left unattended at any time, when participating in dangerous activities, such as the ones listed above. Foster/adoptive parents should assure that children utilize proper safety equipment such as helmets, knee pads, wrist

and elbow pads, etc. when riding bikes, roller blading, or participating in any other activities that may cause injury.

14. Foster/adoptive parents will not allow children, under the age of twelve (12) years old, to operate an All-terrain vehicle.
15. Foster/adoptive parents will assure that children, age twelve (12) years and older, do not operate an all-terrain vehicle without a certificate of completion of a vehicle rider awareness course as offered or approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. During the operation of this activity, the child must wear protective gear and be closely supervised by an adult. See a Summary of West Virginia's ATV Laws.
16. Foster/adoptive parents will assure that children are not passengers on All-terrain vehicles unless more than one passenger is allowed on the vehicle, specified by the manufacture's recommendations, and the driver is an adult caretaker. See a Summary of West Virginia's ATV Laws

Medical Care and First Aid

1. The foster/adoptive parent will keep an ongoing record of the entire child's medical treatment, including routine and emergency, appointments, medications prescribed and any conditions needing follow-up medical attention. This information will be provided to the child's worker to be included in the child's case plan and will be discussed during the quarterly Multidisciplinary Treatment Team meetings. A copy will also be given to the Homefinding Specialist at the quarterly home visit.
2. Foster children are required to be screened by an EPSDT Health Check provider within thirty days of entry into foster care and at scheduled intervals during their stay in foster care. Foster/adoptive parents are required to use this program for physical examinations for the children placed in their homes.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall be responsible for transporting or arranging transportation to medical appointments for the child. Foster/adoptive parents may be reimbursed through the use of Non-Emergency Medical Transportation funds through an application with the Office of Family Support.
4. Accidents causing injury to the child such as a broken bone, a gash that needs stitches, etc. or illnesses must be reported to the child's worker as soon as possible after the occurrence. Serious accidents or illnesses must be reported by the foster/adoptive parent to the protective services hotline if they occur after regular business hours.
5. Foster/adoptive parents shall give a child prescribed medications only with a physician's or dentist's prescription or authorization and shall dispense only the exact dosage of medication prescribed to the child.
6. All medications, either prescriptions or over the counter, must be stored in places inaccessible to children by the foster/adoptive parent. All medicines must have child-proof caps.

7. Foster/adoptive parents must inform the child's worker within one (1) day of any psychotropic medications prescribed for the child. If a child twelve (12) years or older refuses the psychotropic medication, the foster/adoptive parent will abide by the child's wishes and not force the medication upon them. If the child displays a danger to himself or others, due to refusing the medication, the foster/adoptive parent must contact a local hospital/treatment center to have the child evaluated immediately. All information pertaining to the child's desires/concerns about the psychotropic medication must be reported to the child's worker immediately and to the child's MDT for review.
8. All prescription medicines shall be in original containers which are labeled with the individual's name, prescription number and directions for dosage.
9. Foster/adoptive parents are expected to use universal precautions when dealing with any spill of blood or other bodily fluid. Universal precautions currently recommended by the American Red Cross and the Department of Health and Human Resources. This will be taught by the Homefinding Specialist as part of the Pre-Service Orientation.
10. All foster/adoptive parents must become certified in CPR and First Aid within the first year of approval and must keep their certification up to date.
11. First Aid supplies shall be available and stored in a place easily accessible to adults in the home.

14.3 Provider Information Exchange

When a potential provider shows interest in becoming a foster/adoptive home, the Homefinding Specialist will exchange their information with all licensed specialized foster care agencies. This information will inform the Homefinding Specialist as to whether or not the potential provider has ever been a certified provider in the past, their history as a provider, any closures or denials that they may have had, or any other information that may affect the Homefinding Specialist's decision about approving them as a Department provider. The licensed specialized foster care agencies will also exchange information on their potential providers with the Department to aide in their decision making process. The following steps must occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will have the potential foster parent complete the APS/CPS Background Check for Foster Parents located on the Bureau's homepage http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Pages/default.aspx;
2. The Homefinding Specialist will have all adult household members of the potential foster home complete the APS/CPS Background Check regardless of his or her caretaker status;

3. The Homefinding Specialist will have the potential foster parent complete the Disclaimer/Release of Information for any and all existing records held by any public or private child welfare agency;
4. If prior substantiated or unsubstantiated IIU investigations are revealed when the APS/CPS check is conducted in FACTS, the Bureau's central office regulatory management staff will redact and make any copies;
5. The Homefinding Specialist will conduct a comprehensive FACTS and paper record search on each foster parent applicant while the APS/CPS Check is pending;
6. The Homefinding Specialist will send the signed Disclaimer/Release of Information form to each of the licensed specialized foster care agencies to obtain any records that might exist;
7. Upon receipt of a signed Disclaimer/Release of Information form from a licensed specialized foster care agency, the Homefinding Supervisor or designee will gather any and all paper and/or FACTS record information pertaining to the potential specialized foster parent. The records will be redacted to remove identifying child or adult client demographic information that might be contained therein. The Homefinding Supervisor or designee will provide a copy of the redacted records to the requesting specialized foster care agency.

14.4 Family Assessment Process

The foster/adoptive family assessment is an enabling and educational process where the prospective foster/adoptive family's strengths are evaluated to determine their capacity for parenting and to acquaint them with the regulations of the foster care and adoption programs. The Family Assessment Process must be completed and approved prior to children being placed with the family unless a waiver is issued. A waiver cannot be made for the completion of the Criminal Records Check or the APS/CPS Background Check. Waivers for the Family Assessment Process will be determined on a case-by-case basis. This assessment consists of the following:

1. An application to become a foster/adoptive parent;
2. The home assessment which determines the suitability of the family's home, resources, and capacity to parent;
3. Interviews with all members of the foster/adoptive parents' household to ascertain the ability, willingness, and motivation of the family to care for a foster and/or adopted child;
4. Reference checks with at least five (5) individuals who know the

family to speak to their ability to parent, how they react to conflict, experience in parenting, strengths and weaknesses, etc.

5. Criminal record check, including an NCID background check and child/adult protective services records check, including a child abuse check from other states, when necessary, prior to placement, regardless of whether the individual will be receiving foster care maintenance payments. These record checks are to assure that the individuals who wish to become foster/adoptive parents do not have a criminal or abusive background;
6. Thorough records check that will include the FACTS system, any paper documents that exist in the DHHR district offices, and any records that may exist within the specialized foster care agencies including any current or previous experience with other licensed agencies or the Department, and if the potential foster/adoptive parent(s) is currently providing services to more than one (1) licensed agency, the potential foster/adoptive parent(s) shall detail the current services they are providing to each person and agency in a written statement.

The entire family assessment will take no more than ninety (90) days from the initial interview to approval or rejection. (*an exception applies to kinship/relative and ICPC homestudies, see Kinship/Relative & ICPC Studies below) Any delays must be documented in the family's record in FACTS. In no case may a family assessment take longer than one hundred and twenty (120) days.

Potential foster/adoptive providers, including kinship/relative providers, must fully cooperate with the homestudy process, including signing all necessary forms for release of information for records checks, completing paperwork, scheduling interviews, completing fingerprints for background check and maintaining contact with the Homefinding Specialist. If a potential foster/adoptive provider fails to cooperate with the homestudy process, the Homefinding Specialist will attempt to engage the family in the homestudy process and document their attempts in FACTS. If the potential foster/adoptive provider does not cooperate with the process within a thirty (30) day period from the day the homestudy process began, the process will stop and the homestudy will be treated as a denial, due to a lack of cooperation. The foster/adoptive provider record will be closed. * Refer to Denial Section 14.9.

If the family assessment is ordered by the court as part of a custody determination, the Homefinding Supervisor or Child Protective Supervisor will inform the court in writing that the Department no longer provides this service and provide the court with the name and address of a licensed child placing agency in the county to perform the family assessment.

If the Homefinding Supervisor decides to utilize a contracted worker to perform the family assessment, the Homefinding Supervisor will follow the Contracted Home Study Protocol below:

Application

All individuals who wish to provide care to foster/adoptive children must complete the application (SS-FC-9B) to become a foster/adoptive parent. This application must include the following information:

1. Identifying information such as the name, address, DOB, phone number and directions for reaching the home;
2. A listing of all individuals currently residing in the home;
3. A listing of any children not currently residing in the home;
4. Any current or previous marital history information including the date and place of the marriage, any previous marriages, divorce, child custody, etc;
5. Employment information;
6. Residence information including the number of bedrooms, rent or mortgage payments, the source of heat and water, etc;
7. Transportation information;
8. Insurance carrier details;
9. Health status information for all household members;
10. A listing of, and detailed information about, extended family members;
11. The characteristics of children the family desires to parent including approximate ages, sex, number, disabilities the family is willing to accept, etc.;
12. A listing of at least five (5) references not more than one (1) of which may be a relative;
13. An autobiography of each applicant that discusses the significant experiences of the individual's life, his/her parenting experience, ideas about discipline, etc.

The Homefinding Specialist will perform the following actions:

1. Provide the prospective foster/adoptive parents with an application form for completion during Pre-PRIDE Orientation;
2. Review the required release of information forms with the prospective foster/adoptive parent and obtain their signature giving permission to review any possible records existing in

FACTS, the DHHR district offices and within the specialized foster care agencies;

3. Contact the prospective foster/adoptive parent, during session 7 of PRIDE Pre-Service Training, to collect the application. If the applicant needs assistance in completing the information, the Homefinding Specialist will assist them in completing the form;
4. Review the application for completeness and address any missing or vague information with the applicant;
5. Schedule a date with the prospective family to begin the home assessment, during session 7 of PRIDE Pre-Service Training; and
6. Document the application information in FACTS on the Document Tracking Screen.

Home Assessment

The Homefinding Specialist will utilize the Home Study Report (PRL-OSSO) in FACTS as the basis for the family assessment. Most of the information for this report will be pulled from information documented on the Intake and Provider screens. The Homefinding Specialist must assure that the following family assessment information is in FACTS:

1. Names, relationships, dates of birth, social security numbers and race of the prospective foster/adoptive parents;
2. Names, relationships, dates of birth, social security numbers, age, physical characteristics, grade level, school name and race of all children in the home;
3. Names, relationships, dates of birth, social security numbers, age, physical characteristics, education level, etc. of all other adults currently residing in the home;
4. All contact information including the following:
    - At least three (3) face to face interviews with the prospective family that includes an individual contact with each adult applicant and one joint interview with both prospective applicants if the family is a couple;
    - Individual contact with all children and other adults currently residing in the home;
    - At least one (1) interview is to be held in the family's home;
5. Overview of the prospective foster/adoptive family's preparation;
6. A profile of each prospective foster/adoptive parent including:
    - Health history;
    - Education;

- Employment;
- Hobbies and interests;
- Extended family background and early life;
- Sibling information;
- Motivation for pursuing certification as a foster/adoptive parent;

7. Courtship and/or marriage information;
8. Employment history for adult children and others in the home including:
    - Employer information;
    - Occupation;
    - Employment status;
    - Work schedule;
    - Date employed;
    - Date left employment;
    - Employer's address;
    - Employer's phone number;
    - Additional comments
9. A narrative of each child in the home that includes the following information:
    - Appearance;
    - Personality;
    - Educational abilities/scholastic achievements;
    - Health status;
    - Behavior;
    - Feelings about other children entering the home
10. Information about other adults in the home including:
    - Courtship and/or Marital status;
    - Number of children, and
    - Occupation.
11. A narrative on the parenting style and strengths of the prospective foster/adoptive family including:
    - What experiences have the applicants had with parenting;
    - What household rules are established or will be implemented;
    - What constitutes a problem in the family's mind;
    - Are discipline and punishment techniques age appropriate;
    - What discipline methods are used;
    - What punishment methods are used;
    - Is the family comfortable with and willing to abide

by the agency's policy on discipline;
- What are the family's expectations of the agency, the children placed into their home, and the changes that will arise;

12. The type of child desired by the family and understanding of problems a child may have;
13. The social support and resources for the family;
14. The family's housing and neighborhood information;
15. The family's finances including total household information, monthly household expenses, debts incurred by the family, and insurance policies;
16. Each family member's religious beliefs;
17. The family's ability to meet all the eligibility requirements set forth in this policy. (If the family does not meet one or more requirements, documentation of policy waiver, approved by the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant, must be provided.)
18. Criminal Investigation Bureau Background Check (CIB/NCID) records check information;
19. Child and Adult Protective Services record check information; and
20. A list of five (5) references only one (1) of whom may be a family member and two (2) of which must be interviewed in person; and
21. Home assessment evaluation recommendations;
22. Upon completion, the home assessment must be saved to FACTS in the provider's file cabinet.

Interviews

The following will occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will hold the following interviews with each prospective foster/adoptive family:
   - At least three (3) face to face interviews with the prospective family that includes an individual contact with each adult applicant and one joint interview with both prospective applicants if the family is a couple;
   - Individual contact with all children and other adults currently residing in the home;
   - At least one (1) interview is to be held in the family's home;
2. During the interviews the Homefinding Specialist will explore with the following issues with the family:

- The behaviors and problems that a child may bring to the home;
- The family's strengths and weaknesses;
- The Department's discipline policy and what discipline methods the family currently utilizes; and
- The family's understanding of the patience, understanding, flexibility and stamina required to become a foster/adoptive family.

3. The Homefinding Specialist will document these interviews in FACTS on the contact screen and all appropriate fields throughout the application.

References

Reference checks are used to evaluate the prospective foster/adoptive parent's ability to parent, stability, and home life. The applicant must provide the names, addresses and phone numbers of at least five (5) personal references. Only one reference may be a family member.

The following will occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will send the personal reference form (SS-FC-9C) to all of the references provided by the prospective foster/adoptive parent.
2. Face-to-face contact must be made by the Homefinding Specialist with at least two (2) of the references provided by the family.
3. The remaining three (3) references may be contacted by phone or mail.
4. If the references speak positively to the character and abilities of the prospective foster/adoptive parent, and confirm the Homefinding Specialist's positive impression of the applicant, the Homefinding Specialist will continue with the family assessment process.
5. If the references raise questions about the character or ability of the applicant, the Homefinding Specialist will discuss these issues with the Homefinding Supervisor prior to going forward with the application. The Homefinding Specialist will present the information to the evaluation team to determine whether or not the home assessment process should continue or if the home should be denied. Information obtained by the references will be weighed against information gathered through the other aspects of the family assessment.

6. The Homefinding Specialist will document the reference information in FACTS.

Criminal Records Check

West Virginia State Code §49-2-114 requires a criminal background check be completed on potential foster/adoptive parents. The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-248) requires States to complete a finger-print based criminal background check on all prospective foster/adoptive parents through the National Crime Information Database (NCID), prior to placement, whether a maintenance payment will be made to the family or not. All applicants and other adults in the home will authorize the release of criminal records to the Department by completing the FD-258 record check request form. All applicants and other adults in the home must complete a signed Statement of Criminal Record, which provides for a disclosure and authorization statement. If the prospective foster/adoptive parent or any adult member of the household refuses to authorize the check, the home will not be approved. If the applicant or other adult in the home indicate a conviction for which there is no waiver permitted, the home will not be approved. ***Biological parents are not to be set up as a potential provider when a home evaluation is being completed on them. CIB/NCID background checks can be obtained by utilizing this process, although many of the steps may need to be modified in order to appropriately evaluate a biological parent's home for placement.**

The following will occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will fingerprint each adult member of the prospective foster/adoptive family their self, using the FD-258 form and obtain the Statement of Criminal Record from each adult in the home. The Homefinding Specialist will need to complete (2) two FD-258 forms on each prospective foster/adoptive parent. One will be used to obtain the CIB and the other will be used to obtain the NCID.
2. The Homefinding Specialist will either type or print the applicant's full name, home address, sex, race, social security number, and date of birth, and the FD-258 forms. The Homefinding Specialist will document the following on the FD-258 forms in the "reason fingerprinted" box: For a CIB: Foster/Adoptive. For a NCID: Foster/Adoptive-NCID §49-2-114. ***For biological parents, the Homefinding Specialist will indicate the following on the FD-258 forms: For a CIB: in the**

reason fingerprinted box put Biological Parent. For an NCID: in the reason fingerprinted box put NCID §49-2-114 and in the employer and address box add "Biological Parent", with your name and address.

3. The Homefinding Specialist will forward both FD-258 forms to the Division of Children and Adult Services for processing.
4. If the criminal records check shows there have been no criminal convictions for any member of the household, the family assessment process may continue.
5. If the criminal records check shows there has been a criminal conviction for a member of the household, the Homefinding Specialist will determine the scope, nature, and pattern of the conviction within the following guidelines:

- No prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member shall not be approved nor considered for a waiver if ever convicted of:

  1) Abduction;
  2) Any violent felony crime including but not limited to rape, sexual assault, homicide, malicious wounding, unlawful wounding, felonious domestic assault or battery;
  3) Child/adult abuse or neglect;
  4) Crimes which involve the exploitation of a child or an incapacitated adult;
  5) Misdemeanor domestic battery or domestic assault;
  6) Felony arson;
  7) Felony or misdemeanor crime against a child or incapacitated adult which causes harm;
  8) Felony drug related offenses within the last ten (10) years;
  9) Felony DUI within the last ten (10) years;
  10) Hate crimes;
  11) Kidnapping;
  12) Murder/homicide;
  13) Neglect or abuse by a caregiver;
  14) Pornography crimes involving children or incapacitated adults including but not limited to, use of minors in filming sexually explicit conduct, distribution and exhibition of material depicting minors in sexually explicit conduct or sending, distributing, exhibiting, possessing, displaying or transporting material by a parent, guardian or custodian, depicting a child

engaged in sexually explicit conduct;

15) Purchase or sale of a child;
16) Sexual offenses including but not limited to incest, sexual abuse, or indecent exposure.
17) The applicant shall not be approved, employed, utilized nor considered for a waiver if on parole or probation for a felony conviction.

*Misdemeanor simple assault and battery of a non-domestic nature is not included in the category of crimes against a person.

- No prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member shall be approved if convicted of a felony not listed above unless a waiver is requested and approved.
- No prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member may have been convicted of any two or more misdemeanor offenses unless a waiver is requested and approved.
- No prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member may be convicted of any crime and currently be on parole or probation.
- No prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member shall be approved if he/she failed to report convictions to the Department or agency unless a waiver is requested and approved.

6. If the criminal record check shows that a prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member has a “nolo contendere plea” that is for a crime against a person, as specified above, the home will be denied.
7. If the criminal record check shows that a prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member has a “nolo contendere plea” that is not for a crime against a person, as specified above, the plea will be evaluated by the Regional CIB/NCID team for approval or denial. In reviewing the “nolo contendere plea”, the Regional CIB/NCID team will evaluate the crime, plea, and circumstances surrounding the crime in relation to the person’s character.
8. The Homefinding Specialist will notify the applicant in writing of the results of the criminal records background check and the need to discontinue the family assessment if the results show that the prospective foster/adoptive parent or household member has a criminal record that falls within one of the above categories and the applicant is going to be denied. The

applicant will be notified of the Department's grievance policy. ***Refer to the Common Chapter Manual, Section 720, Subpart B for the process and instructions.**

9. If the Homefinding Specialist determines that the applicant's criminal record may be one that could be waived, they will forward the information to the Regional CIB/NCID team for their evaluation. An applicant may have one misdemeanor offense, without requiring a waiver request, unless the misdemeanor is for a crime against a person as indicated above. If the Region does not have an operating CIB/NCID team or the Regional CIB/NCID team cannot make a determination, the Homefinding Specialist will contact the Division of Children and Adult Services Policy Unit for a consult on the waiver. *** No waivers will be considered for convictions listed in paragraph 5 of this section. All other crimes, with the exception of one misdemeanor conviction not classified as a crime against a person, regardless of the age of the conviction, require a waiver before the applicant can proceed with the family assessment.**
10. The Homefinding Specialist will notify the applicant in writing of the results of the criminal records background check and the need for the situation to be reviewed by the Regional CIB/NCID team or the Division of Children and Adult Services.
11. If the Regional CIB/NCID team and/or the Division of Children and Adult Services CIB/NCID teams determine that the prospective foster/adoptive family's waiver can be granted, the Homefinding Specialist may proceed with the family assessment.
12. If the Regional CIB/NCID and/or the Division of Children and Adult Services CIB/NCID teams determine that the prospective foster/adoptive family's waiver cannot be granted, the Homefinding Specialist will not proceed with the family assessment. The Homefinding Specialist will notify the applicant of the decision in writing and inform the applicant of the grievance policy. ***Refer to the Common Chapter Manual, Section 720, Subpart B for the process and instructions.**
13. If the criminal records check shows that no member of the prospective foster/adoptive family's household has a criminal record, the Homefinding Specialist will proceed with the family assessment.
14. The criminal records check information will be received by the CIB staff, who will then mail the results to the Homefinding Specialist. The results must then be documented in FACTS by the Homefinding staff.
15. If the Homefinding Specialist has reason to believe the

foster/adoptive parent has been arrested for a crime after certification, the Homefinding Specialist will submit a request for a CIB and/or NCID to the State Police. If the check shows that the foster/adoptive parent has committed a crime against a person, the Homefinding Specialist will notify the family of the need to close the home unless the crime is of a nature that both the Regional and Division of Children and Adult Services CIB/NCID teams feel is appropriate to waive.

16. The Homefinding Specialist will complete a Statement of Criminal Record on each foster /adoptive parent every two (2) years, after the initial submission with a subsequent CIB and NCID background check completed at least every five (5) years.

Child/Adult Protective Services Records Check

The following will occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will complete a Child and Adult Protective Services record check on all applicants and other household over the age of 18, to assure that they do not have a record of substantiated maltreatment.
2. The Homefinding Specialist will complete a Child and Adult Protective Services record check on all applicants and other household members over the age of eighteen (18), in all states where the applicant or other adult household members have resided, within the past five (5) years, to assure that they do not have a record of substantiated maltreatment.
3. The Homefinding Specialist will deny the application if the records check discloses previous substantiated child or adult maltreatment for an applicant or another household member. The Homefinding Specialist will notify the applicant in writing and inform the family of the Department's grievance policy. ***Refer to the Common Chapter Manual, Section 720, Subpart B for the process and instructions.**
4. The Homefinding Specialist will document all records check results in FACTS.

14.5 Contracted Home Studies/ASO Protocol

If the Homefinding Supervisor decides to utilize a contracted worker to perform the family assessment part of the home study, the Homefinding Supervisor will

advise the contractor that the family assessment must meet all of the Department requirements for foster/adoptive families as contained in this policy and utilize the same processes and forms as the Department's Homefinding staff. The Homefinding Supervisor will be responsible for reviewing the family assessment upon completion to assure that it meets all of the standards and requirements and having it entered into FACTS. The Department may not utilize anyone to complete a family assessment that is not a licensed social worker or provide payment for a home study that does not meet all the necessary requirements or the time frames set forth in this policy.

Once the Homefinding Supervisor determines that the family assessment can be completed by a contracted worker and which contracted worker to utilize, the supervisor will take the following actions:

1. The Homefinding Supervisor will select a contracted worker, who has been credentialed and registered as an ASO provider. They will contact the contracted worker to determine his/her availability to complete the home study within the time frame. The supervisor will advise the contracted worker that the family assessment must meet all of the Department requirements for foster/adoptive families as contained in this policy and utilize the same processes and forms as the Department's Homefinding staff.
2. The Homefinding Supervisor will request the service for the contracted study through the Service> Client> Service Log Screens, in FACTS, in the family case for the home study. They will request the home study under the child or one of the children. If there are multiple studies being requested for one contractor, the supervisor will need to make sure that they request the appropriate number of units (4 per study) to cover the home studies.
3. If the request is through ICPC, the Homefinding Supervisor will open a case in FACTS for the child and for the family, for whom the study is to be completed. The Homefinding Supervisor will request the service for the contracted study through the Service> Client> Service Log Screens, in FACTS, in the child's case for the home study. They will request the home study under the child or one of the children. (The case for the child and family will be maintained on the supervisor's or a designated Homefinding Specialist's workload, until the study has been completed. Once the study has been completed, the child's case can either be closed or transferred to the worker, who is assigned to monitor the child's placement. The families will remain on the Homefinding Specialist's workload assigned to them or it can be closed, if no placement is made.)
4. The Homefinding Supervisor will provide a copy of the referral form to the contracted worker. The ASO Referral Form is printed from

the Service Log, by choosing Options> Print> ASO Referral. The reasons for the referral must be very specific and list the client population, program option, why the referral was made. The contracted worker will then contact the ASO for authorization to provide the service.

5. The contracted worker will have a total of 45 days to complete the family assessment part of the homestudy. If they are unable to complete the assessment within these time frames, they will make contact with the Homefinding Supervisor to explain why the family assessment part of the home study has not been completed and a new time frame may be negotiated.
6. After the home study is completed, the contracted worker will submit the assessment to the Homefinding Supervisor for review. If the assessment meets the Department's requirements for foster/adoptive families, the supervisor will assure that the assessment information is entered into the appropriate FACTS screens and the narrative family assessment, part of the home study, is imported into the File Cabinet of the provider's record in FACTS. (To assist in this process, the contracted worker should provide a floppy disk or CD containing the family assessment part of the home study.) If the assessment does not meet all of the Department's requirements, the assessment will be given back to the contracted worker for corrections.
7. Once the home study has been completed and approved, the Homefinding Supervisor will provide the contracted worker with documentation indicating that the homestudy has been completed. (Some examples of how this can be done are: an e-mail or letter indicating that the study is complete, signing the contractor's invoice or by signing a form from the contractor that the study has been completed). The contracted worker will submit the invoice to the Office of Administration and Finance for payment. The contracted worker will maintain the documentation on the completed homestudy in their records for the ASO reviews. In some instances, completion of the homestudy may be delayed due to pending criminal background results. In these situations, the contracted worker may request payment for three (3) units prior to completing the criminal background portion of the assessment and the final recommendation. Once the homestudy is complete including the criminal background results and final recommendation the contracted worker may request payment for fourth (4th) and final unit of payment.

14.6 Kinship/Relative Homestudies

In cases where a certification is requested for a relative, or a person who the child

views as a relative, the certification of the family must take priority. The certification should be completed within forty-five (45) days from the date of placement of the child in the relative's home, or from the date that the request for the certification is received by the Homefinding Supervisor from a CPS/YS supervisor/worker, when a placement has not been made.

When a child is placed in a kinship/relative home, the placement must also be documented immediately. The child's worker and the Homefinding Specialist will need to take certain steps to ensure that the child's placement is documented in FACTS appropriately and timely.

The following will occur:

1. The child's worker is required to notify the Homefinding Specialist the same day of a child being placed in a kinship/relative's home and provide the Homefinding Specialist with demographic information on the kinship/relative, so the kinship/relative provider record can be established in FACTS.
2. The Homefinding Specialist must enter the kinship/relative provider information into FACTS within one (1) day of receiving the demographic information and notify the child's worker, so the child's placement can be documented in FACTS.
3. Once the child's worker determines that a kinship/relative certification is needed, due to a child being removed from their parent, guardian or custodian, the child's worker must assess the relative's home for general safety and well-being concerns by using the Kinship/Relative Home Study Request form prior to placing a child in the relative's home and/or making a referral for certification. In emergency placement situations, it is strongly recommended that the child's worker collaborate and consult with local law enforcement to gather any and all information, including criminal history regarding the potential kinship/relative provider and members in the household, to assess and ensure the child's safety.
4. The child's worker will do the following during this initial contact and safety check of the relative's home:
    a. complete the Kinship/Relative Home Study Request form;
    b. review DHHR Discipline Policy with the provider;
    c. complete the Statement of Criminal Record with the provider;
    d. complete the W-9 form with the provider;
    e. complete the SS-FC-6A.
5. The child's worker must make the referral for certification to the Homefinding staff **immediately**. A Homefinding Specialist will

visit the kinship/relative home within **five (5) calendar days** of placing a child in the home. At the initial visit, he Homefinding Specialist will do the following:

a. complete the Kinship/Relative Safety Screen form;
b. schedule the provider to complete their fingerprint scans;
c. assess the home for any specific trainings and/or services needed (such as specialized training for children who are medically fragile or have special needs);
d. discuss with the provider that they may attend PRIDE training if they wish, explaining what the benefits of such would be, but that their certification is not contingent on the completion of such;
e. gather two (2) non-relative references from the provider that will be contacted via address and/or telephone call.

The Homefinding Specialist has forty-five (45) days to complete the home study process. If there are things that the kinship/relative provider needs in their home to comply with the safety standards in the Safety Screen, such as carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, or fire escape ladders, the Homefinder may issue a BA-67 to assist the provider in obtaining such.

6. The PRIDE training model may be waived for kinship/relative providers on a case-by-case basis. The waiver process is outlined below. In making that decision, the Homefinding Specialist will assess the relative for any services or trainings that may be needed to care for the child that is being placed in their home. If the child has any special needs or behavioral issues, the Homefinding Specialist must request that the relative attend services or trainings pursuant to such to ensure that the child is receiving the appropriate care and supervision while in the relative's home. The Homefinding Specialist should speak with the Child Protective Services Worker and any other workers associated with the case, review any available medical records, refer to the HealthCheck record of the child, refer to the Birth to Three assessment if it exists, and refer to any other assessment that may contribute to providing for the child's safety, health, and well-being. The Homefinding Specialist will then assist the kinship/relative provider in obtaining those services and/or trainings.
7. To be in compliance with Fostering Connections there will be two Kinship/Relative provider types. There will be a "Certified Kinship/Relative" provider type as well as a "Kinship/Relative" provider type. Regular kinship/relative providers will continue to receive the TANF rate, according to the number of children placed in the home, until certification is complete. "Certified" kinship/relative

providers will receive the foster care boarding care rate of $600 per month, per child from the date of certification. Kinship/relative homes are not entitled to back pay from the months prior to their certification.

8. If a waiver is granted, the kinship/relative provider will be approved as a certified placement resource for the child as long as they meet all safety and sanitation standards. The provider will still be expected to complete any of the services and/or trainings that were recommended by the Homefinding Specialist. The provider will also be expected to complete First Aid/CPR training before they can be recertified as an approved provider. At the time of recertification, this training may be waived on a case-by-case basis. The kinship/relative provider will receive boarding care payments, which will begin on the date that they are approved as a certified placement resource.
9. If a kinship/relative provider is approved as a foster/adoptive provider for a "specific child", and a waiver was granted for one of the foster/adoptive parent eligibility criteria or background checks, the home will not be allowed to provide foster care services for other children. If the provider chooses to provide foster care services to other children, they must meet all of the criteria outlined in this policy. The Homefinding Specialist will be required to complete an updated home study on the provider.
10. The Homefinding Specialist will open the (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive provider record in FACTS, so the placement can be made by the child's worker.
11. To make a placement, the child's worker will need to do a search of the Kinship/Relative Providers in FACTS to locate the (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive provider.
12. Once the (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive provider has been located, the child's worker will request a waiver to make the placement if all of the suggested services and trainings have not been completed, which is located on the Placement Recommendation screen.
13. After the waiver has been requested, the worker's supervisor must review the placement recommendation screen and waiver request prior to approving the placement request.
14. After a waiver has been reviewed and the placement recommendation screen has been approved, the waiver will be submitted to the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant Inbox for approval. A secondary assignment will also be created on the Regional Homefinding Supervisor's workload. The Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant must review the waiver request and determine if the request will be approved or denied.
15. If the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant approves the waiver request, the enter/exit screens will

be enabled for the child's worker to make the placement. If the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant denies the waiver request, the enter/exit screens will not be enabled for the child's worker to make the placement.

16. Once the waiver has been approved or denied, the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant will notify the child's worker and supervisor if the waiver was approved or denied and why.
17. If the waiver was approved, the child's worker must then complete the enter/exit screens on the placement screen in FACTS immediately.
18. After the waiver has been approved or denied, the Regional Program Manager or Regional Child Welfare Consultant will document the end date field in the Assign/Transfer screen in FACTS to end date the secondary assignment.

* ***The (kinship/relative) certification will not be held up due to the lack of completion of PRIDE training, however, background checks for both criminal and CPS/APS history must be completed and a completed safety assessment of the home, in order to become certified.***

***** If the kinship/relative home wishes to adopt the child that has been placed in their home, and they have been granted a training/home study waiver, the Kinship/Relative Safety Screen may be used along with a placement status update to present to the court to show that the placement has been approved and certified.***

14.7 Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) Home Studies

The Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006, P.L.109-239 was signed into law on July 3, 2006. The law amends Titles IV-B and IV- E of the Social Security Act (the Act), encourages States to improve protections for children and holds them accountable for the safe and timely placement of children across State lines.

Under the Act, States are required to complete and report home studies requested by another State within sixty (60) days. An exception to the sixty (60) day requirement is provided (but only until 9/30/08) if the State's failure to complete the home study within sixty (60) days is due to circumstances beyond the State's control (e.g., delays in receipt of Federal agency background checks). This exception gives the State fifteen (15) more days to complete and report on the

home study.

ICPC requests for homestudies for placement requests that meet the definition of a kinship/relative placement in West Virginia are to be conducted as a foster care home study. The Homefinder who is assigned to complete the study must follow the steps as described in Section 14.6 of this policy. *** Please note, if there is a request from ICPC or from a West Virginia circuit court judge, for a homestudy on a biological parent, then the request will be forwarded to the Homefinding Supervisor in the appropriate region for the completion of a Parent/Guardian Placement Evaluation, unless the request asks specifically for an official homestudy to be completed. If there are safety concerns identified in the request or the biological parent has a CPS history, the request will be forwarded to the appropriate county CPS Supervisor and assigned to a CPS worker to complete the Parent/Guardian Placement Evaluation and returned to the sender.**

The homestudy due dates in accordance with P.L. 109-239 will be clearly displayed on the West Virginia ICPC Transmittal that is forwarded to the Regional Homefinding Supervisor with each homestudy request. The due dates represent the final dates by which the West Virginia ICPC Office must forward the completed homestudy to the sending state. This means the completed homestudy report must be received in the West Virginia ICPC Office on or before these due dates. This may require that completed homestudy reports will need to be expedited to the West Virginia ICPC Office by utilizing priority mail, express mail, or fax.

The following will occur:

1. When the Homefinding Supervisor receives an ICPC homestudy request and the West Virginia ICPC Transmittal form, from the ICPC Office, they will immediately review the request and transmittal and assign the homestudy request to a Homefinding Specialist or contractor to complete the homestudy.
2. When the Homefinding Supervisor assigns the ICPC homestudy to a Homefinding Specialist, the Homefinding Supervisor or Homefinding Specialist will make sure that the homestudy request has been entered in FACTS as a Request to Provide Services.
3. The Homefinding Supervisor or Homefinding Specialist will open the Request to Provide Services inquiry as an ICPC provider. The Homefinding Specialist will maintain the family's case on their workload throughout the homestudy process.

4. The Homefinding Specialist should assist the potential provider in obtaining the criminal background clearance, as well as completing the Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services background checks. Appointments may need to set up for the criminal background checks.
5. The Homefinding Specialist will complete the home study request in accordance to the process outlined for the study that is requested in Section 2 of the 100A form.
6. The Homefinding Specialist will inform the potential provider of any pre- service PRIDE training being offered during the assessment period. The potential provider should attend pre-service PRIDE training if it is offered during the assessment period, but they will have up to six (6) months, from the date the homestudy was initiated, to attend the pre-service foster/adoptive parent training, unless a waiver has been granted stating that they are not required to attend PRIDE. The home assessment part of the homestudy process may be approved prior to the training requirement being fulfilled as long as all other requirements have been met. This means that the ICPC provider may be approved as a placement resource for the child, prior to the training requirement being completed. ***** Biological parents are not required to meet the training requirements**.**
7. The Homefinding Specialist will have the ICPC provider review the ICPC Provider Agreement and sign the form. The original agreement will be maintained in the ICPC provider's record and a copy will be given to the provider.
8. The Safe and Timely Form must be completed for every ICPC case. This must be done at 30 days, 60 days, and then again when the home study is complete and ready for review.
9. Once the home assessment is completed and a determination is made as to whether the family can be approved as a placement resource, the Homefinding Specialist will submit the following to the ICPC Office: the completed home study; the Safe and Timely Progress Form; a copy of the ICPC Provider Agreement, a copy of the foster/adoptive parent certificate of approval, and a cover letter.
10. The Homefinding Specialist will document the following within the recommendations of the home study and in the cover letter: whether the placement request is approved; whether the placement request is denied and the reasons for that denial; and whether the home can be fully certified (meets all requirements under WV standards, including training).
11. If an ICPC provider is approved as a foster/adoptive provider for a "specific child", and a waiver was granted, for one of the foster/adoptive parent eligibility criteria or background checks, the home will not be allowed to provide foster care services for other

children. If the provider chooses to provide foster care services to other children, they must meet all of the criteria outlined in this policy. The Homefinding Specialist will be required to complete an updated home study on the provider.

12. If the home study is approved as a placement resource, the ICPC provider record must remain open on the Homefinding Specialist workload until the ICPC Office indicates that there will be no placements made and/or the record should be closed.
13. If the home study is denied as a placement resource, the ICPC provider record should be closed.
14. The Homefinding Specialist will inform the prospective ICPC provider by letter that their home has been denied, the specific criteria under which the provider is being denied, and the right of the provider to file a grievance if they do not agree with the denial. The prospective ICPC provider must file the grievance with the Board of Review within sixty (60) days of the written notification from the Homefinding Specialist.
15. Upon notification of placement, the Homefinding Specialist will make arrangements for the transfer/assignment of any child's case for supervisory services to the appropriate unit/staff. As part of the transfer process, the Homefinding Specialist will provide the supervising unit/staff access to the completed homestudy, ICPC referral, and ICPC paper record.
16. If an ICPC provider is approved as a foster/adoptive provider, as a placement resource only, prior to obtaining the pre-service PRIDE training and does not complete the pre-service PRIDE training within the time frame outlined above, the home will be out of compliance. The Homefinding Specialist will address the issue by notifying the ICPC Office through an Inter-Department Memorandum. The decision to close the home or to remove the children from the home will be made by the sending state.

For more information on ICPC, please see the Standard Operating Procedures for the Interstate Compact Process for DHHR.

14.8 Waivers

During the home study process, the Homefinding Specialist can request a policy exception in the form of a waiver request through the following steps:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will document the waiver request in the Policy Waiver screen in FACTS and submit it for approval. The

Homefinding Specialist will notify the Regional Homefinding Supervisor via e-mail that a waiver has been requested and is in the Regional In Box awaiting approval.

2. Background documentation will need to be included in the waiver screen along with the waiver request. Additional information may need to be forwarded to the Regional Homefinding Supervisor before the waiver can be approved or denied.
3. The Regional Homefinding Supervisor will review the waiver request to determine if they can make a decision on the waiver or if the Regional Program Manager or their designee must make the decision.
4. If policy indicates that the waiver can be approved or denied by the Regional Homefinding Supervisor, then the Regional Homefinding Supervisor will document the waiver approval or denial in FACTS
5. If policy indicated that the waiver must be approved or denied by the Regional Program Manager or their designee, then the Regional Program Manager or their designee will document the waiver approval or denial in FACTS.
6. For waiver requests that cannot be done through FACTS, the Homefinding Specialist will submit the waiver request to their Regional Homefinding Supervisor via e-mail. The same steps as indicated above will be followed, except that they will be done through e-mail. A copy of the e-mail request for the waiver and the approval or denial should be placed in the FACTS file cabinet for the provider.

14.9 Evaluation

Upon completion of the family assessment and the appropriate documentation, the Department will evaluate the material that has been gathered and make a decision to approve or deny the home. The Department will utilize a team approach when evaluating foster/adoptive homes for approval. The evaluation team will consist of the Region's Homefinding staff and at least one designee appointed by the Regional Director.

The following will occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist will notify the Homefinding Supervisor that the prospective family's home assessment has been completed and is ready to be reviewed by the evaluation team;
2. The Homefinding Supervisor will review the information about the prospective foster/adoptive family for completion;
3. The Homefinding Supervisor will schedule an evaluation team meeting to review all prospective foster/adoptive families;
4. The Homefinding Specialist who completed the family's assessment

will present the information gathered on the family for approval or denial by the evaluation team; and

5. The evaluation team will determine if the prospective foster/adoptive family meets the regulations and requirements to become a foster/adoptive family and is appropriate to care for foster and/or adoptive children.

14.10 Home Study Approval/Provider Opening

Following the review by the evaluation team and upon their positive recommendation, the Homefinding Specialist who completed the assessment will do the following:

1. Prepare the foster/adoptive parent certificate (SS-FC-14) for signature by the Homefinding Specialist and the Homefinding Supervisor within ten (10) business days after the evaluation team meeting.
2. Send an approval letter and the certificate to the foster/adoptive family within ten (10) business days of the receiving the signed certificate notifying the family that their home has been approved to provide foster/adoptive care.
3. The Homefinding Specialist will schedule an interview with the foster/adoptive family to review and sign the foster/adoptive parent agreement (SS-FC-5). The Homefinder will document this in FACTS.
4. If the foster/adoptive provider is a kinship/relative caretaker and has met all of the standards for the homestudy, except for the training requirement, the Homefinding Specialist will have the family sign the Addendum B to the Foster/Adoptive Parent Agreement and attach it to the foster/adoptive parent agreement (SS-FC-5).
5. The Homefinding Specialist will provide the family with information and forms concerning the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) option and encourage them to enroll in the EFT option. If the family chooses to enroll in the EFT option and they have more than one provider record in FACTS, they must complete the EFT paperwork for each provider record that is open, to ensure that payments can be made under each record. Detailed information may be found at the State Auditor's web site at www.wvsao.gov
6. The Homefinding Specialist will discuss FACTS Plus with the family and explain how they can access their provider record through FACTS Plus to review payments and other information when necessary. Detailed information may be found at www.wvfacts.org, under the Application section.
7. The Homefinding Specialist will develop the Family Development Plan with the family, identifying the family's training needs related to the PRIDE Competencies for the next year.

8. If the home is approved for foster/adoptive care and no specific child has been identified, the Homefinding Specialist will keep in contact with the family at least once every three (3) months until a placement of a child is made.
9. If no child is placed within one (1) year of the original approval, any changes in the family situation which would impact the type of child the family would consider parenting will be documented in FACTS by the Homefinding Specialist.

Only families that have completed ***all*** of the requirements to become a foster/adoptive family may be approved. The Department is no longer able to provide provisional approval due to changes with federal regulations.

14.11 Home Study Denial

The Homefinding Specialist may discover information that is contrary to the standards and policies set forth by the Department during the assessment process. Any and all information that is gathered during the homestudy process, whether it is through governmental record searches, interviews with references or the media will be used in the decision making process. In addition to not meeting the eligibility criteria in Section 14.2, some other reasons for denial may include, but are in no way restricted to, the following:

1. Behaviors that display a chaotic lifestyle such as chronic tardiness for appointments, missed appointments, threatening behaviors, foul language, and/or inability to maintain employment;
2. Inability to provide basic needs for children;
3. Life-style choices that demonstrate risk-taking behaviors such as gambling;
4. Life-style choices that display concerning behaviors that would act against maintaining the health, welfare and safety of foster children;
5. Conditions of the home not being maintained as safe and stable;
6. Failure to cooperate with the Regional Homefinder completing the home study;
7. Overall attitude that the potential foster/adoptive parents are more concerned about the monetary payments than they are the safety and well-being of the foster children that would be placed in their home.

After reviewing the information gathered by the Homefinding Specialist, the evaluation team may determine that the applicant does not meet one or more of the eligibility criteria. Under this circumstance the Homefinding Specialist will do the following:

1. Inform the prospective foster/adoptive family by letter that their home has been denied, the specific criteria under which the family is being denied, and the right of the family to file a grievance if they do not agree with the denial. The prospective foster/adoptive parents must file the grievance with the Board of Review within sixty (60) days of the written notification from the Homefinding Specialist.
2. If the homestudy was ordered by the court, the Homefinding Specialist will send a copy of the denial letter and the homestudy to the court.
3. The Homefinding Specialist will document the denial in FACTS including the reasons for the denial.
4. The potential foster/adoptive provider record will be closed in FACTS.

   (Please see Foster/Adoptive Family Grievance Section 14.17 for more information.)

14.12 Respite Providers

Respite provides an opportunity for foster/adoptive parents to have time away from the care taking responsibilities. Respite is considered to be at least a day or an overnight stay in an approved setting. In order for a foster/adoptive family to utilize respite services, the respite provider such as another foster/adoptive family, a certified day care, or a certified respite provider must meet the credentials set forth in the ASO UM Guidelines, prior to the arrangement for respite services. Many times a relative of the foster/adoptive family may be approved to provide respite care for a particular foster child, but they must be approved as an ASO respite provider.

** "Respite" is not to be confused with "Babysitting". Babysitting may occur when foster/adoptive parent (s) need to do activities such as, but not limited to: running errands, attending social events or going to doctor appointments. The babysitting will be for supervision and care of the child on a short term basis only, with **no overnight stays**. When foster/adoptive parent(s) utilize "babysitters", in these situations, the requirements for a respite provider do not apply and the foster/adoptive parent is responsible for assuring that the person is appropriate to care for the child and for any payments that may be made to the person. ***Please note: A foster child spending the night with a friend or a relative of the foster or kinship/relative placement, for the purpose of normalcy activities, is not to be considered respite. This activity falls under the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard. Respite is a paid service provided by certified respite providers.**

Because respite providers are not full-time caretakers of children in foster care,

they do not have to meet all the same requirements as foster/adoptive parents. While the Department must assure that a respite provider is a safe caretaker and the home is an appropriate place for a child, these providers do not need to meet every criterion as foster/adoptive families. Respite providers do not have to attend Pre-Service Orientation, nor are they required to meet all of the eligibility requirements for certification. A respite provider must meet the following safety requirements to become certified to provide substitute care for a foster/adoptive family:

1. The respite provider must meet certain prospective foster/adoptive parent eligibility criteria set forth in this policy including all the requirements for:
    - Medical Care/First Aid;
    - Discipline/Supervision;
    - Car Safety;
    - Food/Nutrition;
    - Bathrooms/Bedrooms;
    - Home Safety;
    - Health Status;
    - Capacity;
    - General Eligibility Criteria,
    - CPR Certification (current),
    - Training in: Overview of Behavioral Health Conditions & Developmental Disabilities, Consumer Rights & Confidentiality, Recognition & Reporting Abuse and Neglect, and Documentation. **NOTE: If the prospective respite provider is an existing foster/adoptive provider, a relative or non-custodial friend of the family, items 10 through 12 are not required for credentialing.**
2. The respite provider does not need to meet the following eligibility requirements:
    - Financial/Economic Status, Employment, and Child Care; or
    - Community/Support Services.
3. The respite provider must meet the following family assessment criteria to become certified:
    - A home assessment to determine the suitability of the family's home, resources, and capacity, by the Regional Homefinding Specialist;
    - At least one interview with the prospective applicants in their home, by the Regional Homefinding Specialist;
    - Reference checks of at least three (3) individuals, not more than one (1) of which may be a relative, and one (1) of which must be interviewed in person, by the Regional Homefinding

Specialist;

- Criminal records and child/adult protective services checks to assure that the individual does not have a criminal or abusive background. These will be obtained by the Regional Homefinding Specialist for respite providers identified by foster/adoptive families, kinship/relative families, and Homefinding staff. All other respite providers must obtain their own criminal background checks and request a child/adult protective services background check through the DHHR.

The following must occur to open a respite provider:

1. The prospective respite provider must be entered into FACTS as an Intake and be submitted to the Homefinding Supervisor for approval and assignment, if they have not already been approved as a foster/adoptive provider. The Homefinding Supervisor will assign the inquiry, to provide respite services, to the Homefinding Specialist within five (5) business days from the date of the inquiry.
2. The Homefinding Specialist must document the inquiry as a Request to Provide Services in FACTS, if the inquiry is entered as a new Intake.
3. The Homefinding Specialist must complete a home assessment, if one has not already been completed and has a current status, to determine if the prospective respite provider meets the required eligibility criteria below:
    - The Homefinding Specialist must hold at least one (1) interview with each prospective respite provider in the home;
    - The Homefinding Specialist will contact at least three (3) references, one of which must be in person;
    - The Homefinding Specialist will complete a thorough criminal background check on all adult members of the prospective respite provider's family for those respite providers identified by foster/adoptive families, kinship/relative families, and Homefinding staff;
    - The Homefinding Specialist will complete a thorough child/adult protective services records check for those respite providers identified by foster/adoptive families, kinship/relative families, and Homefinding staff;
4. Once the prospective respite provider meets the criteria and is approved, the Homefinding Specialist will enter the respite provider in FACTS. If the prospective provider is not a foster/adoptive provider, the Homefinding Specialist will open a provider case in FACTS, by selecting the Category: Respite Care, Type: Respite/Foster Family

Care and by completing the Service Administrative Screen for ASO Emergency Respite and ASO Daily Respite. If the provider is an already existing foster/adoptive provider, the Homefinding Specialist will only need to complete the Service Administrative Screen for ASO Emergency Respite and ASO Daily Respite.

(For more guidance on how to complete these individual activities, please refer to the specific section of the provider policy for foster/adoptive families)

**If an individual other than a DHHR foster/adoptive provider wants to provide respite services, they must go through the ASO Enrollment process through The Division of Children and Adult Services*

If a DHHR foster/adoptive provider wants to provide ASO services other than respite, and transportation, they must go through the **ASO Enrollment process through The Division of Children and Adult Services.*

14.13 Referral and Placement Process

The child's worker must document in FACTS on the client's characteristics screen, the placement plan and placement recommendation screens the child's characteristics identified that make placement with a foster/adoptive family appropriate. The child's worker must also document the appropriate information in FACTS on the provider recommendation screen and the placement safety evaluation screen.

Referral Process

When a child must be placed in foster care and it is determined that family foster/adoptive care is an appropriate placement for the child, information about the child and his family must be shared with the Homefinding Unit.

The worker will perform the following actions:

1. Consult with the supervisor and the Multidisciplinary Treatment Team including the child's current service providers, CAPS providers, child's parents, etc. to discuss the child's placement needs.
2. Complete the family's and child's assessment, if not already done.

3. Compile the necessary information as a referral packet to be forwarded to the Homefinding Unit for their determination on appropriate placement. The child's worker must provide information about the child and his family in a factual and forthright manner that accurately portrays the child's situation. The referral packet to be sent to the Homefinding Unit should include the following information if available on the child:

- Child, Youth and Family Case Plan or YS Youth's Case Plan, Youth Behavior Evaluation, CAR if the child had a CAPS assessment, and Family Assessment for child protective services children
- Social Summary of the child
- School information
- Psychological/psychiatric evaluation
- Birth certificate
- Social Security Card
- Immunization records
- Medical information
- Copy of the court order granting the Department custody

4. If the above information is not available at the time of the referral, the child's worker will compile the information as soon as possible.

5. The child's worker must document the referral in FACTS on the contact screen

Placement

The following will occur:

1. If the foster/adoptive family accepts the child for placement, the child's worker shall arrange a date for the placement. The placement should occur in a timely manner following the intake or pre-placement visit. It is possible for the intake interview and pre-placement visit to occur on the same day as the placement. This is not appropriate in most situations and should only be utilized when absolutely necessary.
2. The child's worker will provide the foster/adoptive parents with the SS-FC-6A agreement to care for the individual child placed in the home. The foster/adoptive parents must sign this form and be provided a copy as proof that the Department has approved the placement of this child. The form should be maintained in the child's Journey Placement Notebook.
3. The child's worker will provide the child's Journey Placement

Notebook to the foster/adoptive parents, explaining its contents and how the Notebook is to be utilized by the foster/adoptive parents. The worker will emphasize the requirement that the provider utilize the Monthly Out-of Home Observation Reports and the Placement/Departure Wardrobe and Personal Item Inventory List on a continual basis. The child's worker will provide the MDT Brochure and the Foster/Adoptive or Kinship Care Providers Guidebook to the foster parent, explaining how the books are to be utilized.

4. The child's worker will participate in the actual placement and will provide transportation for the child and his family.
5. The child's placement effective date will be entered in FACTS within three (3) business days of the placement. This will also generate a medical card for the child within a timely manner. In addition, this will also ensure that the child has an EPSDT Health Check screening scheduled within five days as required by the Sanders Consent Decree. The worker will document that the Journey Placement Notebook was provided to the foster/adoptive parents in FACTS on the Placement Recommendation Screen, by choosing the Journey Placement Notebook under the pick list
6. If the child was in foster care prior to this placement, the child's medical card and SS-FC-40 are to be given to the foster/adoptive family in case medical services are required prior to the issuance of a card to the foster/adoptive family for the child. If the child was not in foster care prior to this placement or the child's medical card cannot be located, the child's worker will provide and SS-FC-40 and SS-FC-40A to the caretaker for the child's emergency medical needs. The forms should be maintained in the child's Journey Placement Notebook.
7. If one of the child's parents is not known to the Department, the child's worker will initiate efforts to locate the absent or unknown parent as a possible placement resource for the child and to include that parent on all court documents.
8. The worker shall assess the child's initial placement clothing needs and complete the Placement/Departure Wardrobe and Personal Item Inventory List, contained in the Journey Notebook, of the child's personal belongings.
9. The child's worker will notify the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement and the Office of Family Support of the child's placement in foster care, if appropriate.
10. If the child is being placed outside his current school district, the worker must notify both schools of the child's new living arrangements within three (3) business days of the placement

and arrange to have the child's school records transferred to the new school.

11. The child's worker will complete the Birth Parents Background Information merge form (SS-FC-12) and the Birth and Medical History of the Child merge form (SS-FC-12A) in FACTS within the first thirty (30) days of the child's placement. The forms should be maintained in the child's Journey Placement Notebook.
12. The foster/adoptive parent will purchase a life book for the child. The worker with the assistance of the foster/adoptive parents will gather pictures; drawings; vital information about the child's biological parents, siblings, extended family, pets; how the child was raised in terms of culture and religion; school information; family memories; etc. to be included in the child's life book that will follow the child through all foster care placements until he is released from the foster care system. It will be the responsibility of the child's worker to make sure that the child's life book is maintained and updated through each placement. These updates may be completed during Multidisciplinary Treatment Team meetings, family visits, between the biological parents and the foster/adoptive family.
13. The child's worker will document all placement contacts in FACTS on the contact screen including progress reports and case staffings as appropriate.
14. If the child's worker anticipates adjustment problems, these are to be discussed with the foster/adoptive parents at the time of placement.

14.14 Supports for Foster/Adoptive Families

Foster/Adoptive Parent Associations

It is important for foster/adoptive families to be supported in their efforts to provide care and nurture the children placed in their homes. One way to do this is through regular contact between Department staff and the foster/adoptive parents. In addition, there are other opportunities Homefinding staff should pursue to provide support for families.

The following will occur:

If there is a local foster/adoptive parent association in the area, the Homefinding Specialist will provide all new foster/adoptive parents with contact names and numbers for the association. Local foster/adoptive parent associations provide members with an opportunity to interact with others that may be encountering similar experiences. These meetings often function as support groups, training opportunities, recreational activities, etc.

For new foster/adoptive parents who may need more direct assistance and support than what can be provided by the local foster/adoptive parent association, or there is no foster/adoptive parent association in the area, the Homefinding Specialist should identify an established foster/adoptive family to mentor the new family. Mentoring by an established foster/adoptive family provides guidance, support, and direction to new foster/adoptive parents through the many obstacles and difficult situations that occur as part of providing foster/adoptive services.

If child welfare staff encounter situations where communication barriers exist, such as non-English speaking clients or providers, or there is a need for sign language, staff must request an interpreter by contacting Interpreters Unlimited at 855-620-6899.

FACTS Plus

FACTS PLUS (Provider Look Up System) is a part of the Families and Children Tracking System (FACTS). It is a secure web based application which permits registered providers to access information maintained in our records regarding their provider record and the children served.

The following will occur:

1. The Homefinding Specialist must provide all foster/adoptive providers and kinship/relative providers with information concerning the availability of FACTS Plus and how to access the system.

2. If the foster/adoptive or kinship/relative provider wants to access FACTS Plus, they must first complete the FACTS PLUS application and Confidentiality Statement, which are available online from the FACTS PLUS home page .

3. The provider will click on the 'New Account' hyperlink to open the FACTS PLUS Application.

4. The provider will have the option of printing a blank FACTS PLUS application form or completing the online Application Form and then using your Internet Browser button to print the form. The provider will need to click on the blue 'Confidentiality Statement' hyperlink on the FACTS PLUS Application to access this form. **Note**: The provider must have Adobe Acrobat 4.0 to open this document. The provider can download a free copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader from the Adobe website or you can request that FACTS Email, FAX, or Mail a copy of the Confidentiality Statement to them.

5. The Application must be signed by the person for whom access to FACTS PLUS is being requested and if applicable, by the Agency Director authorizing the request. Please fax the completed FACTS PLUS Application to the FACTS Help Desk at (304) 558-5868 or mail it to the FACTS Project, WV - DHHR, 350 Capitol Street, Room 601, Charleston, WV 25301.

14.15 Non-Compliance/Corrective Action

Failure of foster/adoptive parents to meet the standards outlined in this policy shall be considered non-compliance issues and shall be discussed with the family. Depending on the nature and severity of the discrepancy, the foster/adoptive parents may be offered a corrective action plan or the home may be closed.

Any abuse or neglect complaints, or when there has been a finding of maltreatment must not be considered a non-compliance issue. These situations are to be handled through the Institutional Investigative Unit (IIU). (Refer to Section 14.15 of this policy for the process). If there are substantiated abuse or neglect complaints in a foster home, the home must be closed as per §49-4-111.

Examples of non-compliance issues which may not require an offering of a corrective action plan could include but are not limited to the following: repeatedly non-compliant; multiple non-compliance issues at one time; refusal to cooperate with staff; failure to maintain certification requirements; or a (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive provider who does not meet the training requirement to become fully certified.

Examples of non-compliance issues, which may result in the offering of a corrective action plan, may include but are not limited to the following: the foster/adoptive

parent did not complete the follow-up medical exam requirement; the foster/adoptive parent moves and the new home does not meet a specific standard - too many children are sharing a room, or children of the opposite sex are sharing a room; the foster/adoptive parent uses inappropriate punishment; the foster/adoptive parent did not provide appropriate supervision for a child; non-compliance with the Health Check requirement or the inability of the foster/adoptive parent to successfully complete the First Aid, CPR or In-Service training requirements.

The Homefinding Specialist must determine whether the non-compliance issue requires that the home be closed or if a corrective action plan can alleviate the issue.

The following will occur:

1. Each incidence of non-compliance will be fully assessed by the Homefinding Specialist and documented in FACTS.
2. If the Homefinding Specialist determines that a home must be closed for a non-compliance issue and there are children placed in the home, the homefinding specialist must notify the child's worker immediately that the home is out of compliance and will be closed.
3. If there are no current placements in the foster/adoptive home, the home will be closed immediately.
4. If the home is a (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive home that is being closed due to non-compliance with meeting full certification as outlined in Section 14.5 and there are current placements in the home, the Homefinding Specialist must inform the child's worker that the child's placement must be exited out of the foster/adoptive provider record immediately and entered into the kinship/relative record, in FACTS. *The home must be closed as a foster/adoptive home in these instances, but may remain open as a non-paid kinship/relative home.
    - The Homefinding Specialist must have the kinship/relative provider record re-opened in FACTS, so the child's placement can be exited from the foster/adoptive provider's record and entered into the kinship/relative provider's record in FACTS, by the child's worker.
    - Once the child's placement has been exited out of the (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive provider record in FACTS, the foster/adoptive provider record must be closed immediately by the Homefinding Specialist.
    - If the (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive provider chooses to complete the PRIDE training to meet full certification after the home is closed, the home may be re-opened as long as it is prior to the annual review date. If they complete the

PRIDE training after the annual review date, the home may still be re-opened, but an annual review/update will be required on the family. Homes closed for (2) years or more will need to be processed as a new study.

5. If the Homefinding Specialist determines that the non-compliance issue does not rise to the level of requiring that the home be closed, a corrective action plan will be developed by the Homefinding Specialist with the assistance of the foster/adoptive family and approved by the Homefinding Supervisor.
6. Part of the corrective action plan will include training and other opportunities for the foster/adoptive family to develop acceptable alternatives to the issue.
7. All corrective action plans must be time limited with clear and specific objectives to be accomplished by the foster/adoptive family.
8. The Homefinding Specialist will document the corrective action plan in FACTS.
9. No new placements will be made in the home while the corrective action plan is in effect.
10. Failure of the foster/adoptive parent to cooperate with the terms of the corrective action plan and/or to correct existing situations identified in the corrective action plan will result in the closure of the home.
11. When a foster/adoptive home is closed as a result of non-compliance with or without a corrective action plan, a letter will be sent to inform the foster/adoptive parent of the specific reason for the closure and the right of the family to file a grievance if they do not agree with the closure. A copy of the letter will be saved in the provider's record in FACTS. The foster/adoptive parents must file the grievance with the Board of Review within sixty (60) days of the written notification from the Homefinding Specialist.

14.16 Investigations of Allegations of Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster/Adoptive Family Homes

The Department has the authority to remove children from a foster/adoptive home during the investigation of abuse/neglect complaints, if the allegation is of a nature that warrants the removal. The Department may remove a child in these circumstances even though the child may have been in the home more than eighteen (18) months.

When a protective services allegation is received on a foster/adoptive home the following shall occur:

1. The Institutional Investigative Unit (IIU) Supervisor shall be notified of

the complaint as soon as it is received and the referral is entered in FACTS. The IIU Supervisor will determine if the allegation is protective services in nature.

2. An assessment and investigation of the allegation shall be done in accordance with the West Virginia State Code laws and time frames that govern the investigations of child/adult abuse and neglect.
3. If the determination is made that the allegation is not a protective services referral, the IIU Supervisor will forward the referral to the Homefinding Supervisor, for the family, or the DHHR Licensing Specialist, for the agency, so the referral can be reviewed for non-compliance issues.
4. If the determination is made that the allegation is a protective services referral, and the foster/adoptive home is certified by the Department, the IIU Supervisor or worker will provide notification via e-mail that a report has been received; an investigation has been initiated; and the name of the IIU worker assigned to the investigation to the Community Services Manager and Residential Licensing Specialist or Regional Homefinding Supervisor. If the investigation is on a Specialized Agency foster/adoptive home, the IIU Supervisor or worker will notify an agency that a report has been received; an investigation has been initiated; and the name of the IIU worker assigned to the investigation and direct any actions that must be taken to ensure the safety of the child pending the completion of the investigation especially whenever the report involves sexual abuse or serious physical injury to a child or the home is unsafe.
5. If the investigation is on a DHHR foster/adoptive home, the Community Service Manager or designee and the Regional Homefinding Supervisor or designee must assure that the child's immediate needs for safety, medical care and/or removal are addressed, especially whenever the report involves sexual abuse or serious physical injury to a child or the home is unsafe.
6. If the foster/adoptive family refuses to participate in an investigation, the IIU will immediately notify the Residential Licensing Specialist or the Regional Homefinding Supervisor for further action. The IIU worker will send written notification to the foster/adoptive family informing them of the referral and that they have twenty (20) calendar days, of receiving written notification, to contest the allegations. If they fail to contest the allegations in this time frame, all foster care arrangement will be permanently terminated.
7. The IIU worker will confer with the Regional Homefinding Supervisor or the Residential Licensing Specialist when the investigation is completed to determine if the findings involve a violation of Licensing Regulations or Homefinding Policy. A copy of the IIU/CPS Summary Report will be prepared and filed in the FACTS File Cabinet.

8. Prior to the completion of the investigation, if the Department determines that reasonable cause exists to support the allegation, the Department will remove all foster children from the home and preclude contact between the child and the provider.
9. The Department must terminate the foster/trial adoptive arrangement if one of the following situations occurs:
    - The allegation is determined to be true by the Department;
    - A court finds the allegation to be true; or
    - The foster/adoptive family fails to contest the allegation within twenty (20) calendar days of receiving written notice of such allegations. *However, the Department is permitted to exercise its professional discretion in electing to not terminate the placement arrangement if the foster or adoptive parents are not found to be culpable in the abuse/neglect and the continued placement is in the best interest of the child. Depending on the circumstances, the Department may terminate all placement arrangements and close the home or implement a time-limited corrective action plan which addresses the issues identified as problematic in the investigation. This plan must be regularly reviewed by the Adult or Child Protective Service and Homefinding Supervisors or the DHHR Licensing Specialist and the executive director of the child placing agency.*
10. Upon completion of the investigation the IIU Supervisor will review and approve the investigation. The IIU Supervisor will provide a copy of the IIU/CPS Summary Report to the Specialized Agency or Regional Homefinding Supervisor; notify the Regional Program Manager, Community Services Manager and Residential Licensing Specialist (when a licensed agency is involved) by e-mail of the investigation finding; provide direction for the Regional Homefinding Supervisor or Specialized Agency on the development of a corrective action plan when the finding is of a non-compliance nature and notify the foster/adoptive family in writing that the foster care arrangements have been terminated when it has been determined that child abuse or neglect occurred.
11. The Department will inform the foster/adoptive parents of their opportunity for a fair hearing/grievance process, in writing, if they do not agree with the Department's decision. The foster/adoptive parents must file the grievance with the Board of Review within sixty (60) days of the written notification from the Department.
12. A copy of all forms and recordings pertaining to the investigation shall be maintained in the child's record. No one has a right to review and/or copy the record except for the child or the child's parents. Requests

for access from any other person are to be denied unless there is a court order granting access or the record is subpoenaed. The Homefinding Specialist must make a notation in the Provider's record in FACTS pertaining to the outcome of the investigation.

13. The IIU Supervisor will document the results of the investigation in FACTS.

14.17 Foster/Adoptive Family Grievances

Any decision made by the Department is subject to a challenge by the foster/adoptive parent by requesting a fair hearing.

The following will occur:

1. When an applicant does not agree with the Department's reason to deny him from becoming a foster/adoptive parent or when a foster/adoptive family does not agree with a decision made by the Department, the Homefinding Specialist or the child's worker will explain that the family has a right to have a conference with the Homefinding Supervisor and/or Child Protective Services/Foster Care/Youth Services Supervisor to review the matter and will assist in arranging an appointment.
2. If no solution is achieved the Homefinding Specialist or the child's worker will inform the applicant or the foster/adoptive family of their right to file a grievance, as indicated in the letter notifying them of a decision made by the Department. The Homefinding Specialist or the child's worker will assist the foster/adoptive parents in completing the Client and Provider Grievance Hearing Request Form (SS-28). ***Refer to the Common Chapter Manual, Section 720, Subpart B for the process and instructions.**
3. The applicant or foster/adoptive parent(s) must file the grievance within sixty (60) days of the written notification from the Homefinding Specialist of their right to file a grievance concerning the Department's decision, with which they disagree.
4. A grievance hearing will be scheduled by one of the State Hearings Officers. The foster/adoptive family may be represented by an attorney at their own expense, if they desire.
5. A written summary and decision will be prepared by the hearings officer and all parties will be notified. The hearings officer's decision is to be implemented within ten (10) days of the receipt of the decision.
6. Foster/adoptive parents may petition the Circuit Court of Kanawha County to review their concerns if they are dissatisfied with the decision

of the hearings officer.

7. All grievances will be documented in the provider's FACTS record by the Homefinding Specialist.

14.17.1 Nondiscrimination, Grievance Procedure & Due Process Standards, Reasonable Modification Policies, and Confidentiality

14.17.1a Nondiscrimination

As a recipient of Federal financial assistance, the Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) does not exclude, deny benefits to, or otherwise discriminate against any person on the ground of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or creed in admission to, participation in, or receipt of the services and benefits under any of its programs and activities, whether carried out by BCF directly or through a contractor or any other entity with which BCF arranges to carry out its programs and activities.

This statement is in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin) ("Title VI"), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (nondiscrimination on the basis of disability) ("Section 504"), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (nondiscrimination on the basis of age) ("Age Act"), regulations of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued pursuant to these three statutes at Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 80, 84, and 91.

The Bureau for Children and Families shall not retaliate against, intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Title VI, Section 504 or the Age Act, or because she or he has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing.

In addition, BCF will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all BCF programs, services, and activities. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed in Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Children and Families, offices even where pets are generally prohibited.

In case of questions, or to request an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a BCF program, service, or activity, please contact:

WV DHHR: Children and Adult Services
Contact Person: Health and Human Resources Specialist
Telephone number: (304) 558 0955

14.17.1b Grievance Procedure and Due Process Standards

It is the policy of the Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) not to discriminate on the basis of disability. BCF has adopted an internal grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq., and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794. These statutes prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. In addition, the Bureau for Children and Families does not discriminate against individuals due to race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion. Laws and Regulations, 28 C.F.R. Part 35 and 45 C.F.R. Part 84, may be examined by clicking here or visiting https://www.ada.gov/reg3a.html.

Any person who believes she or he has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability may file a grievance under this procedure. It is against the law for any Bureau for Children and Families official to retaliate in any way against anyone who files a grievance or cooperates in the investigation of a grievance.

A: PROCEDURE:

Grievance requests due to alleged discriminatory actions must be submitted to the Department of Health and Human Resources, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Civil Rights Officer, within 180 business days of the date the person filing the grievance becomes aware of the alleged discriminatory action. To file the grievance, the grievant must complete form IG-CR-3 and mail to West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of

Human Resources Management, EEO/Civil Rights Officer, One Davis Square, Suite 400,Charleston, WV 25301. The grievant may also contact the WV DHHR, EEO/Civil Rights Officer, for more information.

WVDHHR: Office of Human Resource Management
Contact Person: EEO/Civil Rights Officer
Telephone number: (304) 558 6811
Fax: (304) 558 6051

A grievance must be in writing, containing the name and address of the person filing it. The grievance must state the problem or action alleged to be discriminatory and the remedy or relief sought.

EEO/Civil Rights Officer shall conduct an investigation of the grievance. This investigation may be informal, but it must be thorough, affording all interested persons an opportunity to submit evidence relevant to the grievance. EEO/Civil Rights Officer shall maintain the files and records of Bureau for Children and Families relating to such grievances.

The EEO/Civil Rights Officer shall issue a written decision on the grievance no later than thirty (30) calendar days after its filing, unless the Coordinator documents exigent circumstances requiring additional time to issue a decision.

The person filing the grievance may appeal the decision by contacting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, Office for Civil Rights.

The availability and use of this grievance procedure does not prevent a person from filing a private lawsuit in Federal court or a complaint of discrimination on the basis of disability with the:

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Room 509F HHS Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20201
800-368-1019 (voice)
202-619-3818 (fax)
800-537-7697 (TDD)
OCRComplaint@hhs.gov (email)

The Bureau for Children and Families will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that individuals with disabilities are provided reasonable modifications, if needed, to participate in this grievance process. Such arrangements may include, but are not limited to, providing interpreters for the deaf, providing taped cassettes of material for the blind, or assuring a barrier-free location for the proceedings. The EEO/Civil Rights Officer will be responsible for such arrangements.

B: GRIEVANCES REGARDING THE CHILD WELFARE WORKER OR CASEWORK PROCESS

At any time that the Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) is involved with a client, the client (adult or child), or the counsel for the child has a right to express a concern about the manner in which they are treated, including the services they are or are not permitted to receive.

Whenever a parent, child or counsel for the parent or child has a complaint about Child Welfare Services or expresses dissatisfaction with Child Welfare Worker the worker will:

- Explain to the client the reasons for the action taken or the position of the BCF which may have resulted in the dissatisfaction of the client.
- If the situation cannot be resolved, explain to the client his/her right to a meeting with the supervisor.
- Assist in arranging for a meeting with the supervisor.

The supervisor will:

- Review all reports, records and documentation relevant to the situation.
- Determine whether all actions taken were within the boundaries of the law, policies and guidelines for practice.
- Meet with the client.
- If the problem cannot be resolved, provide the client with the form "Client and Provider Hearing Request", SS-28, found in Appendix A of this policy.
- Assist the client with completing the SS-28, if requested.
- Complete the form IG-BR-29 CPS/APS (to be completed by Bureau staff)
- Submit the from immediately to the Chairman, state board of Review, DHHR, Building 6, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305.

For more information on Grievance Procedures for Social Services please see Common Chapters Manual, Chapter 700, and Subpart B or see WV Code §29A-5-1

Note: Some issues such as the decisions of the Circuit Court cannot be addressed through the Grievance Process. Concerns about or dissatisfactions with the decisions of the Court including any approved Case plan must be addressed through the appropriate legal channels.

14.17.1c Reasonable Modification Policy

A: PURPOSE:

In accordance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) shall not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities. The BCF shall make reasonable modifications in the Homefinding program policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless BCF can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.

B: POLICY:

The Bureau for Children and Families is prohibited from establishing policies and practices that categorically limit or exclude qualified individuals with disabilities from participating in the Homefinding program.

The Bureau for Children and Families will not exclude any individual with a disability from the full and equal enjoyment of its services, programs, or activities, unless the individual poses a direct threat to the health or safety of themselves or others, that cannot be mitigated by reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services.

The Bureau for Children and Families is prohibited from making Homefinding program application and retention decisions based on unfounded stereotypes about what individuals with disabilities can do, or how much assistance they may require. The BCF will conduct individualized assessments of qualified individuals with disabilities before making Youth Services application and retention decisions.

The Bureau for Children and Families may ask for information necessary to determine whether an applicant or participant who has requested a reasonable modification has a disability-related need for the modification, when the individual's disability and need for the modification are not readily apparent or known. BCF will confidentially maintain the medical records or other health information of Child Welfare program applicants and participants.

The Bureau for Children and Families upon request, will make reasonable modifications for qualified Child Welfare program applicants or participants with disabilities unless BCF can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.

BCF must consider, on a case-by-case basis, individual requests for reasonable modifications in its Child Welfare program, including, but not limited to, requests for substitute caregivers, respite caregivers, more frequent support from a case worker, additional classroom and/or online training, mentorship with an experienced foster/adoptive parent, note takers, and other auxiliary aids and services.

The Bureau for Children and Families will not place a surcharge on a particular qualified individual with a disability or any group of qualified individuals with disabilities to cover the cost of measures, such as the provision of auxiliary aids and services or program accessibility, that are necessary to provide nondiscriminatory treatment required by Title II of the ADA and Section 504.

To address any violations of this Reasonable Modification Policy, consult the Bureau for Children and Families Grievance Procedure. To request reasonable modifications, or if you have questions, please contact:

WV DHHR: Children and Adult Services
Contact Person: Health and Human Resource Specialist
Telephone number: (304) 558 0955

14.18 Post Approval Contact/Supervision

It is important for approved foster/adoptive parents to be contacted on a regular basis to ensure that the family is functioning well; dealing appropriately with any difficulties the child placed in the home may be experiencing; participating in the Multidisciplinary Treatment Team meetings, court hearings, reviews, IEP's, etc. for the child; completing their required in-service training; providing adequate and appropriate supervision and care; etc. The Homefinding Specialist is responsible for supervising approved foster/adoptive parents and monitoring all changes that may occur with the foster/adoptive family.

The following will occur:

1. The child's worker and the Homefinding Specialist will have face to face contact with the foster/adoptive family on the day of the placement, when it is a planned placement. The child's worker and Homefinding Specialist will work together to schedule these placements to ensure that both are available at the time of placement.
2. The Homefinding Specialist will have face to face contact with the foster/adoptive family within five (5) calendar days of a child being placed in a home on an emergency basis.
3. The Homefinding Specialist will have contact with the foster/adoptive

family at least once every two weeks for the first month of a new placement.

4. The Homefinding Specialist will contact the foster/adoptive parent at least once a month regardless of if the home has a child placed in the home or not. This contact may be by phone or in person.
5. The Homefinding Specialist must make a face-to-face contact with the foster/adoptive family in their home at least once every three (3) months for families who have a child placed in their home. If the foster/adoptive family does not currently have a child placed in their home, the Homefinding Specialist may contact the family by phone.
6. The Homefinding Specialist will update the home study when there has been a significant change within the family's home/circumstances such as, a divorce, death in household, loss of employment, new home, loss of home, marriage, catastrophic illness, etc.
7. The Homefinding Specialist will document all contacts with the foster/adoptive family in FACTS in the contact screen.

14.19 Recertification

The Homefinding Specialist will complete a re-evaluation of each approved foster/adoptive family (SS-FC-9F) in FACTS within twelve (12) months from the date the family was approved (The evaluation must be completed prior to the foster/adoptive family's certification anniversary month). This assessment must include the following information:

1. General demographic information of all persons living in the home;
2. Any changes that may have occurred in the home since the last evaluation such as household composition, finances, health, etc;
3. Sleeping accommodations for each household member;
4. Training courses attended by the foster/adoptive parents within the past twelve (12) months;
5. All the foster children served in the past twelve (12) months;
6. Activities of the foster/adoptive family and ability of the family to provide care for the child such as:
    - Provides adequate physical care
    - Maintains the child's personal items and clothing inventory for the child
    - Works with the birth family
    - Routinely transports foster children
    - Supervises visits
    - Attends group training opportunities
    - Communicates information about the child promptly to

the child's worker
- Seeks prior approval for activities and trips
- Attends and participates in MDTs, reviews, and hearings
- Observes confidentiality
- Prepares child for permanency
- Complies with EPSDT Health Check screenings
- Prepares children for independence through life skills instruction
- Advocates for the children with the school system
- Maintains life book for each child
- Utilizes clothing allotments appropriately
- Participates in child's therapy
- Implements counseling recommendations
- Maintains the child's medical records
- Participates in the local Foster Parent Association
- Maintains the child's Journey Notebook
- Completes the Out of Home Observation Report for each child in the home on a monthly basis

7. Areas of strengths/needs within the family;
8. Problems or concerns during the past twelve (12) months;
9. A review of the Family Development Plan, in which the Homefinding Specialist will revisit and further develop such plan with each foster/adoptive parent, which identifies training needs, the specific learning opportunities the foster/adoptive parent must complete in order to address the parent's individual needs, and the estimated number of hours necessary to complete. As part of the Family Development Plan, the homefinding specialist will ensure that all foster parents receive training on Healthy Sexual Development so that they may convey this information to the children in their home in an age-appropriate manner.
10. A review of the family's emergency/disaster plan and updating the plan when necessary;
11. The Homefinding Specialist's comments and recommendations in relation to the PRIDE Competencies and any needed training in those areas;
12. The foster/adoptive parents' beliefs, comments, and/or recommendations;
13. Information about the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Option, to determine if the family has enrolled in the process.

Once the above information is gathered for the re-evaluation of the foster/adoptive home, the following steps will be completed:

1. The evaluation team will review the information and make recommendations about the foster/adoptive family.
2. The Homefinding Specialist will notify the foster/adoptive family of the approval or denial, of the re-evaluation, in writing. A certificate signed by the Homefinding Specialist and the Homefinding Supervisor will be sent to the family that has successfully completed the recertification within ten (10) business days.
3. The Homefinding Specialist must document the recertification date in FACTS within two (2) business days of the completion of the recertification.
4. The Homefinding Specialist will develop a new Family Development Plan with the foster/adoptive family to address any issues related to the PRIDE Competencies and the family's training needs for the next twelve (12) months.
5. The Homefinding Specialist will provide the family with information and forms concerning the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) option and encourage them to enroll in the EFT option, if they have not already done so. If the family chooses to enroll in the EFT option and they have more than one provider record in FACTS, they must complete the EFT paperwork for each provider record that is open, to ensure that payments can be made under each record. Detailed information may be found at the State Auditor's web site at www.wvsao.gov
6. The Homefinding Specialist will discuss FACTS Plus with the family and explain how they can access their provider record through FACTS Plus to review payments and other information when necessary. Detailed information may be found at www.wvfacts.org, under the Application section.

**** If the provider has been granted a training/home study waiver, and their original certification was based on the Kinship/Relative Home Study Request form and the CIB and CPS and APS background checks, the Homefinding Specialist will use the Kinship/Relative Home Study Request form to recertify the provider every twelve (12) months.***

14.20 In Service Training

Training serves the dual purpose of providing foster/adoptive parents an opportunity to increase their understanding of problem situations and behaviors and an opportunity for obtaining the support of other foster/adoptive parents. Training may be provided by Department staff, Schools of Social Work staff, community resources, adult education centers, hospitals, libraries, etc. Training done by persons other than Department staff, or by Schools of Social Work, must

have approval of the Homefinding Specialist.

Foster parents may also obtain training through videos, books, the internet, DVDs, TV educational programs and other resources that have been approved by the Homefinding Specialist. In order to earn hours for in-service training through one of these methods, the foster parent must provide the Homefinding Specialist with documentation showing that they gained knowledge from the training. An example of this would be a narrative report on the topic.

The following will occur:

1. All foster/adoptive parents must attend at least twelve (12) hours of in service training annually. The content of the training will be based on needs expressed by the foster/adoptive parents or the Department.
2. All foster/adoptive parents must attend at least twelve (12) hours of in service training annually. The content of the training will be based on needs expressed by the foster/adoptive parents or the Department. In **addition** to the above training, all foster/adoptive parents must receive CPR/First aid training each year.
3. The Homefinding Specialist will develop the Family Development Plan, with each foster/adoptive parent, which identifies training needs, the specific learning opportunities the foster/adoptive parent must complete in order to address the parent's individual needs, and the estimated number of hours necessary to complete.
4. As part of the Family Development Plan, the homefinding specialist will ensure that all foster parents receive training on Healthy Sexual Development so that they may convey this information to the children in their home in an age-appropriate manner.
5. The Homefinding Specialist will document all in-service training in FACTS.

14.21 Dual Providers

In general, foster/adoptive families are not allowed to provide services to more than one program at a time. Foster/Adoptive Care, Adult Family Care, Day Care, Specialized Family Care, and Specialized Foster/Adoptive Care are all vitally important programs within the Department, and each requires a great deal of time and energy on the part of the provider.

The following will occur:

1. There are specific instances when a family may be delivering

services to more than one program simultaneously. Before agreeing to these arrangements, the Homefinding Specialist, the child's worker and the supervisor(s) of all programs involved must evaluate all aspects of the situation to determine that this is the best possible arrangement.

2. If everyone on the local level agrees that this is in the best interest of all those involved, the Homefinding Specialist will request a policy waiver in FACTS and forward the necessary information to the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant.

14.22 Department Employees as Providers

Department employees have the right to apply to become foster/adoptive parents. In order to avoid charges of favoritism or impropriety in these situations, certain additional safeguards must be considered when accepting these applications. Department employees may apply to be foster/adoptive parents through the Department or through a licensed child placing agency. If the employee chooses to become a foster/adoptive parent for the Department the following will apply:

1. Department employees will be advised by the Homefinding Specialist, in the employees home Region, that they must comply with the same standards and regulations as all other applicants.
2. The Homefinding Supervisor will refer the Department employee to the Homefinding Supervisor in another Region, for the home study. The Homefinding Supervisor will assign the potential employee provider's home study to a Homefinding Specialist in their Region.
3. The Homefinding Supervisor in the other Region will maintain the employee's file in a way to assure confidentiality. The employee's FACTS record will be maintained by the Homefinding Specialist assigned to the employee's study/provider record and their supervisor.
4. When children are placed in the home of an employee provider, the placement will be supervised by the child's worker and supervisor from a different county than the one the employee normally works in. The child's worker must not be a person that could be considered a friend or co- worker, and whose decisions concerning the child and their placement could be seen as showing favoritism towards the employee provider.
5. Workers within a District office, where an employee provider works, will not place children in the home of that employee provider.
6. The employee provider or co-worker of the employee provider will not participate in any discussions or decisions concerning the

removal from the child's parent/guardians and/or initial placement of any child that may be placed in the employee's home. This is to avoid any charges of favoritism or impropriety in situations where a Department employee may receive placement of a child from the same Region where they reside.

7. The employee provider will not have current or future caseload responsibility for any child placed in the home.
8. Workers within a District office, where Regional staff are employee providers, for the Department or a child placing agency, and who work in the same District office, will not place children in the home of that employee provider. Regional staff, who are employee providers, must adhere to the restrictions on placement as described in the above worker actions four (4) through seven (7).
9. Employee providers will have all of the rights and responsibilities of any foster/adoptive parent upon placement of a child into their home, such as knowledge of the child's medical background, behavioral problems, permanency plan, and will participate in the child's MDT, hearings, IEP, case staffings, etc.

14.23 Employees with Licensed Child Placing Agencies as Providers

Employees of child placing agencies will not be foster/adoptive parents for the agency that employs them, nor shall they have current or future casework responsibilities for any child placed in their home. If an employee of a child placing agency wishes to become a foster/adoptive parent, they must have their home study completed by the Department or another private child placing agency. Department employees may choose to become foster/adoptive parents for a child placing agency and the child placing agency may complete the home study for the employee.

Employee providers who contract with a private child placing agency for foster/adoptive care are expected to comply with all the standards and practices set forth in this policy and child placing regulations.

In order to avoid charges of favoritism or impropriety in certain situations, certain additional safeguards must be considered after the employee is established as a foster/adoptive parent. If an employee of a child placing agency or the Department becomes a foster/adoptive parent for a child placing agency, the following will apply:

1. The employee, of the agency or the Department, will be advised

by the child placing agency that they must comply with the same standards and regulations as all other applicants.

2. The child placing agency will refer the agency employee to the Homefinding Supervisor, for the Department, in their Region, for the home study. The Homefinding Supervisor will assign the potential employee provider's home study to a Homefinding Specialist in their Region. The home study for Department employee may be completed by the child placing agency.
3. The child placing agency or the Department Homefinding Supervisor will maintain the employee's file in a way to assure confidentiality. If the home study is completed by the Department, the employee's FACTS record will be maintained by the Homefinding Specialist assigned to the employee's study/provider record and their supervisor.
4. When children are placed in the home of an employee provider, the placement will be supervised by the child's worker and supervisor from a different county than the one the employee normally works in. The child's worker must not be a person that could be considered a friend or co- worker, and whose decisions concerning the child and their placement could be seen as showing favoritism towards the employee provider.
5. Workers within a District office, where an employee provider works, will not place children in the home of that employee provider.
6. The employee provider or co-worker of the employee provider will not participate in any discussions or decisions concerning the removal and/or placement of any child that may be placed in the employee's home. This is to avoid any charges of favoritism or impropriety in situations where a Department employee may receive placement of a child from the same Region where they reside.
7. The employee provider will not have current or future caseload responsibility for any child placed in the home.
8. Workers within a District office, where Regional staff are employee providers, for the Department or a child placing agency and work in the same District office, will not place children in the home of that employee provider. Regional staff, who are employee providers, must adhere to the restrictions on placement as described in the above worker actions four (4) through seven (7).
9. Employee providers will have all of the rights and responsibilities of any foster/adoptive parent upon placement of a child into their home, such as knowledge of the child's medical background, behavioral problems, permanency plan, and will participate in the child's MDT, hearings, IEP, case staffings, etc.

14.24 Liability Insurance

The Department of Health and Human Resources and the State Board of Risk and Insurance Management (BRIM) have developed an agreement to provide general liability and property insurance protection for all approved foster homes in West Virginia.

General Liability Insurance

This insurance protects the Department including its employees and the foster/adoptive parents for negligent acts of the foster child that causes injury or damage to persons other than the foster/adoptive parent. AIG National Union Fire is the insurance company that covers the Department for these liabilities.

Property Insurance

This insurance protects the foster/adoptive parent for property damage caused by the foster child to the foster/adoptive parents' own property. Losses will be adjusted on an actual cash value basis (replacement cost less physical depreciation.) Each loss will be subject to a two thousand five hundred-dollar ($2,500.00) deductible with the foster/adoptive parent responsible for the first three hundred dollars ($300.00) of the loss.

The following will occur:

The Homefinding Specialist will provide the foster/adoptive parents with the liability insurance loss notice form. The insurance notice claim form is used to report general liability losses - negligent acts of the foster child that causes injury or damage to persons other than the foster/adoptive parent and property damage caused by the foster child to the foster/adoptive parents' own property. The form can be printed from Brim's website.

2. The Homefinding Specialist will provide a cover memo explaining the current foster care situation including the name of the foster child and foster/adoptive parents and length of time the child has lived in the home.

3. The Community Services Manager or designee must co-sign the insurance loss notice claim form, before it is submitted for review.

4. The Homefinding Specialist will forward the appropriate form and cover memo to: the Director, Division of Assets and Project Management, Building 3, Room 552, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305.

5. The Homefinding Specialist will retain a copy of the insurance loss notice claim form in the client's case record and document it's location in FACTS, document tracking and submit a copy of the insurance loss notice claim to the Commissioner of the Bureau for Children and Families.

14.25 Changes of Address/Moves

Foster/adoptive parents may move either within the state or to a location outside the borders of West Virginia. They may desire to keep the foster children with them when they move.

Moves within the State

When the family moves to a different area of the state, the Regional Homefinding Supervisor will contact the Regional Homefinding Supervisor in the receiving region by memo prior to forwarding the record. The family's new address and phone number shall be included in the referral packet as well as directions to the home, if known. The foster/adoptive family will be given the name of the Regional Homefinding Supervisor in the new locality and instructed to contact the Homefinding Supervisor within five (5) working days following the move. The Homefinding Supervisor will require that an update be completed on the family, prior to any new placements being made in the home.

Moves Out of State

When foster/adoptive parents plan to move out of state and wish to take the foster child with them, the Homefinding Specialist, child's worker, and Supervisors will discuss the child's circumstances and make a determination if this move is in the best interest of the child. Factors that should be considered include:

1. Is this a permanent or temporary placement?

2. How long has the child resided in the home?

3. If parental rights have not been terminated, does the birth family agree to this arrangement?

4. What impact will the move have on the birth parents and sibling visitation and/or reunification plan?

5. Does the court order need to be amended to allow the child to live in a different state?

If none of the above are factors and the child's needs are best met by remaining with the foster/adoptive parents, a revised placement plan should be presented to the child's MDT and Regional Director for approval. **The Interstate Compact provision must be adhered to for the placement process. Refer to Section 11 in the Foster Care Policy.**

14.26 Rights & Responsibilities of Foster/Adoptive Parents

Foster/adoptive parenting is a shared responsibility between the foster/adoptive parents, the Department, the Court, and the birth parents. A close working relationship between all of the members is a necessary part of providing foster care. Foster/adoptive parents can provide better care when they understand their rights and responsibilities and participate fully in planning for the child's life.

Responsibilities to the Child

Daily Living

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide children with a normal family life, including food, shelter, clothing, affection, training, recreation, education, opportunities for socializing and opportunities for religious, spiritual, or ethical development.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide structure and daily activities designed to promote the individual physical, social, intellectual, spiritual and emotional development of the children in their home.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide appropriate opportunities for activities which stimulate the growth and development of the

children.

4. Foster/adoptive parents shall assist the children to develop skills and to perform tasks which will promote independence and the ability to care for themselves. This includes, but is not limited to, information about healthy sexual development such as family planning, pregnancy prevention, and sexually transmitted diseases.
5. Foster/adoptive parents shall cooperate with the Department to help the children maintain an awareness of their past, a record of the present and a plan for the future.
6. Foster/adoptive parents shall ask children to assume household work responsibilities reasonable for their age and ability and commensurate with those expected of their own children.

Confidentiality

1. The foster/adoptive family shall treat written or oral personal information and documentation about the child and the child's family in a confidential manner according to the West Virginia Code §49-5-101. Foster/adoptive parents have the responsibility to safeguard the child's privacy by not engaging in activities or behaviors that will expose the child to negative publicity.

2. Foster/adoptive parents do not have the right to sign consents for the child to be photographed for publication in print or the electronic media. Only the child's worker can give this permission.

3. It is the policy of the DHHR/BCF to encourage normalcy in the lives of foster/adoptive children. As such, it is acceptable to post photos of a foster/adoptive child(ren) in family or group setting (school, sports, sleepovers, parties, etc.) on social media. However, in any social media posting,(photographic or print) foster/adoptive parents are prohibited from releasing any information regarding: the fact that the children are in a foster/adoptive circumstance, the foster adoptive child(ren)'s previous custodians, geographic or demographic information that could jeopardize the foster child(ren)'s safety, or any other information that would breach the confidentiality provisions of West Virginia Code Section §49-5-101. These prohibitions

continue even after any placement has ended. Furthermore, for the safety of the children, it is strongly advised that all such postings be made on private settings, to be seen by the foster/adoptive parent's friend groups only and not posted publicly.

Allowance and Income

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide an allowance for the child's discretionary spending at a rate set by the Department in the Foster/Adoptive Parents Agreement. Foster/adoptive parents shall make no demands that allowance money be spent on family activities initiated by the foster/adoptive parents. The foster/adoptive parents shall not expect the child to spend personal allowance money for items covered by the boarding care payment.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall not accept any part of a child's earned or unearned income without prior, written agreement of the Department and the child.

Savings Accounts for Foster Children

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall encourage children in their homes to open a savings account and to teach good money management habits. Savings accounts are to be considered the child's personal property. If the child returns home or moves to a different placement, the contents of the account are to go with the child.

Clothing/Child's Personal Effects

1. If the child's worker determines that the child is in need of clothing at the time of placement the worker will issue an initial clothing allowance to be paid to the foster/adoptive parent or directly to a vendor for the purchase of clothing. The foster/adoptive parent must use these funds to purchase clothing and other personal items for the child. At no time may a foster/adoptive parent keep a child's clothes or personal items

when the child leaves the home for any reason.

2. Foster/adoptive parents shall maintain a basic wardrobe for each child placed in their home. Approximately fifteen percent (15%) of the foster/adoptive parent's monthly boarding care payment will be utilized to purchase necessary clothing and other personal items. The child's clothing and other personal items are considered the child's personal property and must accompany the child when the child is moved from the home. "Personal items" are not to be considered the same as "personal necessities", such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, make-up, etc.
3. Foster/adoptive parents must maintain an inventory of clothing and personal items each child owns, by utilizing the Clothing and Personal Item Inventory List. This should be updated at least every three (3) months as a record that each child's clothing needs are being adequately met and/or when a child moves to a new placement. This inventory list is to be kept in each child's Journey Placement Notebook held by the foster parent and shared with the child's worker every three (3) months.

Religious and Ethnic Heritage

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall recognize, encourage and support the religious beliefs, heritage and language of the child and his family. Foster/adoptive parents shall, if possible, arrange transportation to religious services or ethnic events for a child whose beliefs and practices are different from their own.
2. Formal religious affiliation is not required to be a foster/adoptive parent. Foster/adoptive parents shall not force or coerce children into attending religious services or ethnic events that are against their will or beliefs. If the child has a different religious affiliation than the foster/adoptive parent, it is expected that arrangements will be made to assure the child continues to attend the services in the denomination of their choice, if the child wishes to do so.
3. Foster/adoptive parents must be willing to become culturally competent and able to understand the importance of race, ethnicity, religious, and/or cultural issues in family and community life and in planning for children in their care.
4. Foster parents must be sensitive to sexual identity issues including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning

youth.

5. At least one foster/adoptive parent must demonstrate effective communication in the primary language of the child placed in the home and in English.

Medical Care

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall ensure that the foster child(ren) in their care receive all necessary comprehensive health screens as required by the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program, known as HealthCheck. In addition, it is further agreed that they will maintain records of all such screens and to ensure that the child(ren) is/are scheduled for and receive all necessary follow-up medical, dental, optical or psychological treatment as prescribed by screening provider.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall notify the Department if foster child (ren) in their care requires hospitalization or surgery whether it is an emergency or a non-emergency situation.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall document or maintain documentation of the child(ren)'s medical care in the child's Journey Placement Notebook.

Education

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall enroll each child of school age in school within three (3) school days of the placement of the child. Information needed to enroll a child in school shall be provided by the Department. Exceptions may be made by the Department's Regional Directors.
2. Foster/adoptive parents of a child of an appropriate age shall cooperate and shall take part with the Multidisciplinary Treatment Team (MDT) in selection and arrangements for educational programs appropriate for the child's age, abilities and treatment plan.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall be aware of, and share with the child's worker the strengths and limitations of the individual child that they have observed from interactions with him, in order that appropriate educational and supportive services can be provided.
4. Foster/adoptive parents shall plan with school personnel when there are any problems with the child in school, and

report to the child's worker serious situations which require the Department's involvement or consent.

Consents

1. Foster/adoptive parents may have to notify the Department at times to request consent prior to certain activities occurring which affect foster children. Some of the requests that must be submitted to the Department are: when a child wishes to marry, apply for a driver's license, enter the armed forces, travel out of state, HIV testing, surgery or emergency surgery. The foster/adoptive parent must understand that in some instances, the parent(s) consent may be required prior to the activity occurring.

Recreation and Community

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide opportunities for recreational activities which are appropriate to the age and abilities of the child.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall encourage children to take part in community service activities both with the family and on their own.

Supporting the Child during Reunification/Moves

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall assist the child to get ready for or make changes in his life, such as returning home, moving to a more restrictive living situation, moving towards independence or preparing for the permanency of an adoptive home or legal guardianship home, if the child is unable to establish a permanency in their home.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide the Department with at least (10) ten days notification when requesting the removal of a child from their home, so appropriate planning for the child can occur.

Record Keeping

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall maintain records in

accordance with the Department's procedures for children placed with the family including maintaining the Journey Placement Notebook, Life Book, Out of Home Observation Reports, medical and school information, clothing and personal items inventory and important names, addresses and phone numbers.

Transportation

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall assist in transporting the child as needed for school, visitation, medical or counseling appointments, MDT's, court hearings, etc. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide all "routine transportation activities" as needed, such as transportation for school, church, recreational activities, etc… (***Foster/adoptive parents may be reimbursed for some transportation activities as outlined in the ASO UM Guidelines.)***
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall have access to a reliable vehicle, which can appropriately transport all of the children, at one time, who are placed in the home. The vehicle will be properly registered, inspected and insured and will also document that anyone who will transport the children has a valid driver's license.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall follow the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's guidelines for proper car safety. ***(See the Car Safety Section of this policy for further information.)***

Prudent Parenting

Any child who comes into care under a Chapter 49 abuse and neglect proceeding is entitled to participate in age-appropriate activities for the child's emotional well-being and development of valuable life-coping skills. The Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) shall make efforts to normalize the lives of children in their custody and to empower a caregiver to approve or disapprove a child's participation in activities based on the caregiver's own assessment using a reasonable and prudent parent standard, without prior approval of Child and Family Services. BCF shall allow a caregiver to make important decisions, similar to the decisions that a parent is entitled to make, regarding the child's participation in activities. BCF will verify that private agencies providing out-of-home placement under contract with BCF, promote and protect the ability of a child to participate in age-appropriate activities. A caregiver is not liable for harm caused to a child in an out-of-home placement

if the child participates in an activity approved by the caregiver, provided that the caregiver has acted in accordance with a reasonable and prudent parent standard.

A caregiver shall use a reasonable and prudent parent standard in determining whether to permit a child to participate in an activity. “Reasonable and prudent parent” standard means the standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the child’s health, safety, and best interests. When making such decisions, a caregiver shall consider:

- The child's age, maturity, and developmental level to maintain the overall health and safety of the child;
- Potential risk factors and the appropriateness of the activity;
- The best interest of the child based on the caregiver's knowledge of the child;
- The importance of encouraging the child's emotional and developmental growth;
- The importance of providing the child with the most family-like living experience possible; and
- The behavioral history of the child and the child's ability to safely participate in the proposed activity.

In applying the reasonable and prudent parent standard, foster parents are required to take reasonable steps to determine the appropriateness of the activity in consideration of the child’s age, maturity, and developmental level. It is recognized that there are many different ways to determine whether an activity is appropriate for a foster child in your care. Therefore, the following examples of “reasonable steps” that a foster parent may take in making this determination are provided as a guide to assist in the decision-making process:

- Have adequate information about the foster child in your care;
- take into account the type of activity and consider the foster child’s mental and physical health, as well as behavioral propensities;
- consider where the activity will be held, with whom the foster child will be going, and when they will return.

Foster parents and residential providers will also need to take into account the reasonable, foreseeable risks of an activity and what safety factors and direct supervision may be involved in the activity in order to prevent potential harm to the foster child. (i.e., hunting, paint ball, archery or similar activities that may

pose a higher risk). Caregivers shall ensure that the child has the safety equipment and any necessary permissions and training necessary to safely engage in each activity the child participates in.

When children are placed in a group home or residential treatment setting, the provider will incorporate normalcy activities into the program. The activities will be in-line with the reasonable and prudent parent standard and will help children with skills essential for positive development.

Responsibilities to the Child's Family

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall present a positive image of the child's family to him.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall demonstrate respect for the child's own family and shall agree to work with the child's family members as indicated in the child's treatment plan.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall participate in the development of a visitation plan to allow children and their family members to visit and communicate in accordance with the plan. Intercepting or reading incoming or outgoing mail of a child is prohibited.

Responsibilities to the Department

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall accept any foster child(ren), mutually agreeable to the parties, that are referred by the Department into their home for foster care.
2. Foster/adoptive parents shall cooperate in the ongoing monitoring of their homes and share the information required for the agency to verify compliance.
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall not allow the child(ren) in their care to be given to their biological parent(s) or anyone other than a representative of the Department, unless permission to do so has been granted by the Department.
4. Foster/adoptive parents shall not discuss complaints, problems, difficulties, or suggestions concerning the foster child in an effort to resolve the issues and pressures of the placement with the child's biological parent(s). The foster/adoptive parent shall discuss all issue with the Department worker.
5. Foster/adoptive parents shall annually participate in the required in-service training.
6. Foster/adoptive parents shall provide advance notice when possible to the Department regarding changes which affect the

life and circumstances of the foster/adoptive family.

7. Foster/adoptive parents must report any child abuse/neglect allegations disclosed to the foster/adoptive parent.
8. Foster/adoptive parents shall immediately notify the Department regarding any hospitalization, surgery, accident, serious illness, death, arrest or detention by a law enforcement agency of a child, or about any other unanticipated incident involving the child placed in their home.
9. Foster/adoptive parents shall inform the Department of a charge, arrest or indictment of any adult household member within twenty-four (24) hours of the occurrence.

Training

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall maintain their CPR and First Aid certification.
2. Foster/adoptive parents will attend at least fifty (50) hours of in-service training every five (5) years.

Involvement in Service Planning and Delivery

1. Foster/adoptive parents shall be willing to work cooperatively with the Department staff as a member of the Multidisciplinary Treatment Team. They shall participate in the development and implementation of the case plan for each child placed in their home.
2. When contacted by the Department concerning the placement of a child in their home, foster/adoptive parents have the right to certain information concerning the child, and his biological family:
3. Foster/adoptive parents shall be involved in the development of the child's case plan and to receive a copy of that plan and their role in the implementation of the child's case plan shall be clearly defined.
4. Foster/adoptive parents shall work with the biological parents during the case planning process. They will be informed of any problems they might encounter with the birth parents, prior to this process beginning.
5. Foster/adoptive parents shall be fully aware of the type of discipline they can use with foster children. **Use of any corporal punishment is not allowed.**

6. Foster/adoptive parents shall be informed of visitation arrangements between the child and his birth parents and/or siblings, and the expected role of the foster/adoptive parents in those visits, if any.
7. Foster/adoptive parents shall attend Administrative Reviews, foster/adoptive provider's file cabinet in FACTS Plus or submitted to the Homefinding Specialist in an electronic format by the foster/adoptive parent(s).
8. If the emergency/disaster plan is submitted in an electronic format, the Homefinding Specialist will save a copy of the emergency/disaster plan in the file cabinet in FACTS, in the foster/adoptive provider's record.
9. All updates/changes made to the emergency/disaster must be saved to the provider's file cabinet in FACTS. The Homefinding Specialist must be notified when updates/changes have been made to the emergency/disaster plan.

   ** Emergency/Disaster planning will be discussed during PRIDE Training with all prospective foster/adoptive parents at the Pre-Service Orientation PRIDE and Session 9, Taking PRIDE: Making an Informed Decision (Panel Discussion), by the Homefinding Specialist.*

14.27 Foster/Adoptive Parents Expectations of the Department

Foster/adoptive parents have the right to expect that the agency shall:

1. Keep all information maintained by the agency about them confidential.
2. Inform them of the child's background and his physical and mental functioning in order that appropriate care and protection can be provided.
3. Inform them of any problems they might encounter as a result of this placement, such as acting out, stealing, lying, and hostility.
4. Inform them of specific behaviors in which the child has previously engaged prior to this placement, to the degree that the worker has knowledge of such behaviors.
5. Provide a Department worker to visit, monitor and supervise the care of the child(ren) and the home.
6. Provide foster/adoptive parents with access to all information maintained in the provider record within the framework of agency guidelines and to request correction of errors in those records.

7. Provide foster child(ren) with medical care and comprehensive health screens using the EPSDT Program, known as HealthCheck.
8. Protect them from liability and personal loss arising out of the performance of their role as foster/adoptive parents. Foster/adoptive parents shall not be liable for personal injury that a child may incur, unless negligence on their part can be established. Foster/adoptive parents have a duty, however, to take all reasonable measures to protect the child from injury.
9. Fully inform foster/adoptive parents of their rights and responsibilities and of all agency policies and court procedures which affect their relationship with the child.
10. Notify foster/adoptive parents of all court hearings that involve a child in their home. Foster/adoptive parents may be subpoenaed by the Court.
11. Provide ongoing training, guidance and support to deal with appropriately with each child placed with them according to his case plan and to assist them in helping the child overcome physical, emotional, and educational problems.
12. Work with the child in accordance with the child's case plan.
13. Provide financial compensation as outlined in the Foster/Adoptive Parent Agreement.
14. Provide written agreement to the child's removal from their home in accordance with the provisions of West Virginia State Code §49-4-111.
15. Fully inform foster/adoptive parents regarding the Department's service provider grievance procedures if they disagree with an agency decision.
16. Permit foster/adoptive parents to appeal a decision to remove a child from their home, in accordance with the provisions of West Virginia State Code §49-4-111.
17. Inform foster/adoptive parents that they have the right to grieve a decision to close their home. They have the right to request a corrective action plan be considered to resolve the matter.

14.28 Runaway, Missing, or Abducted Children

When a child is missing, abducted, or is on runaway status, it is vital that information is reported quickly to law enforcement agencies, to ensure the child's safe return. The Department requires foster care providers to provide notification to the Department and law enforcement **immediately** when a child runs away, is missing, or is abducted.

The child's worker will take the following steps to ensure that the child is located safely and quickly:

- The child's worker must contact law enforcement within 24 hours to follow-up on the foster care provider's report. They may need to file a runaway petition or missing person's report if one has not been filed by the provider.
- The child's worker will provide law enforcement with any information needed to locate the child. The child's SafeKids Pix ID card, family photos, or school pictures should be utilized to assist in the identification of the child.
- The child's worker will cooperate with law enforcement completely to locate the child.
- The child's worker must notify the child's biological parents, if parental rights have not been terminated, immediately about the child's situation.
- The child's worker must notify their immediate supervisor and Community Services Manager when a child is missing or abducted, immediately.
- The child's worker must notify the court, guardian ad litem, or attorney for the child when a child is missing, abducted, or on runaway status.

Once the child has been located and returned, the foster parents or residential facility providing care for the child will complete the Away From Supervision Forms with the following information:

- Expeditiously locating any child missing from foster care;
- Determining the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from care, and to the extent possible and appropriate, responding to those factors in current and subsequent placements;
- Determining the child's experiences while absent from care, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim; and
- Reporting such related information as required by the Secretary.
- Based on child's experiences while away from supervision, arrange for appropriate evaluations or exams.

14.29 Denials and Closures of Homes

Foster/Adoptive Parent Requests Termination

A foster/adoptive home may be closed at any time at the provider's request. The foster/adoptive parent shall agree, in writing, to give the agency at least thirty (30) days' notice when requesting the voluntary closure of their home. Reasons for the request should be discussed with the Homefinding Specialist who will document in the FACTS provider record the reasons for closure. The Homefinding Specialist will close the provider record in FACTS.

Closure of Approved Homes

Foster parenting is a privilege and not an entitlement. Therefore, the Bureau for Children and Families reserves the right to place its foster children with adults who will provide a safe, secure living environment where children can grow and flourish. Foster parents must display that they can provide parenting that is strengths-based and free from fear-based disciplinary tactics of any kind. Any and all information of which the Bureau becomes aware regarding an open foster home, whether it is through governmental record searches, interviews, investigations, interviews with concerned citizens or the media will be used in determining if children should continue in the foster home.

A foster/adoptive home may be closed on an involuntarily basis when situations arise that place a child at risk of maltreatment or when the placement may cause a detriment to the child's well-being. Although, the Department shall close an approved home when any of the following occur, the Department is not limited to these reasons for closing an approved home:

1. Substantiated neglect or abuse of a foster child, including sexual abuse or exploitation by the foster/adoptive parents, as per §49-4-111;

2. Presence of a serious physical or mental illness which may impair or preclude adequate care of the child by the foster/adoptive parent;

3. Failure of the foster/adoptive parent to cooperate with the terms of the corrective action plan and/or to correct existing situations identified in the corrective action plan;

4. Presence of a non-compliance issue or multiple issues, which cannot be alleviated by a corrective action plan. Or, a non-compliance issue or multiple issues which are serious enough to not warrant a corrective action plan;

5. Failure of a (kinship/relative) foster/adoptive parent to comply with meeting the certification standards to become fully certified by completing the training requirements within the time period set out in policy;

6. Repeated child abuse referrals that display a pattern of concerning parental behaviors and attitudes that while may not rise to the level of abuse and neglect, call to question the intentions and motivations of the foster parent(s);

7. Child abuse and neglect investigations that result in no maltreatment findings but demonstrate that the foster parent is overwhelmed, dissatisfied or frustrated by the parenting requirements outlined in foster care policy;

8. Evidence that the foster children in said home are fearful and voice the desire to be moved from the foster home;

9. Any other acts or situations that place a child at risk of maltreatment, or are seen as a detriment to the child's well-being;

10 The Homefinding Specialist will document the reasons for closure in FACTS and close the provider record in FACTS.

Closure - Failure to Meet Annual Training Requirements

The homes of foster/adoptive parents who do not meet the training requirements shall be closed. The only exception shall be for families who have a child in their care longer than 18 months, when the child has developed a significant emotional attachment to the foster/adoptive parents and whose best interests will be served by preserving the placement, as per §49-4-111. No additional children shall be placed in the home until the training requirement has been satisfactorily met.

14.30 Payments/Rates

Boarding care payments on behalf of the child are intended to pay for the ordinary basic maintenance and child care needs of the child placed in foster/adoptive family care. Foster care maintenance payments may be made only on behalf of a child who is (1) in the foster family home of an individual, whether the payments are made to the individual or to a private child placing agency or (2) in a residential child care and treatment facility whether the payments are made to such facility or to a private child placing agency, which payments shall be limited to include only those items which are included in the term "foster care maintenance payments".

The term "foster care maintenance payments" means payments to cover the cost of (and the cost of providing) food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, a child's personal incidentals, liability insurance with respect to a child, reasonable travel to the child's home for visitation, and reasonable travel for the child to remain in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement. In the case of

group residential facility care, such term shall include the reasonable costs of administration and operation of such institution as are necessarily required to provide the items described in the preceding sentence. In cases where a child placed in a foster family home or group residential facility is the parent of a son or daughter who is in the same home or group residential facility, and payments are being made with respect to such child, the foster care maintenance payments made with respect to such child shall also include such amounts as may be necessary to cover the cost of the items-defined as foster care maintenance.

Boarding Care Payment Specific to Specialized Family Care Medley

Rates for specialized family care are set at the state level. These rates are considered all-inclusive except for medical and placement clothing. All other expenses including transportation, clothing, food, shelter, personal needs, supervision, etc. are included. No other payments are to be paid to any specialized family care agency or specialized family care family.

The current boarding care rate for a specialized family care is six hundred dollars ($600.00) per month per child. However, children who meet the eligibility criteria for Specialized Family Care are usually eligible for Title XIX waiver or personal care. Specialized Family care providers are eligible to bill for Medicaid providing those services directly.

The Bureau for Children and Families currently has an agreement with West Virginia University – Centers for Excellence in Disability (WVU-CED) to provide home finding services for Specialized Family Care homes.

Boarding Care Corrections

Payment to be issued to a foster/adoptive family for placement services only. This is used primarily for corrective payments to foster/adoptive families. Field staff should only be doing these payments for DHHR foster/adoptive homes and DHHR emergency shelter foster families. Therapeutic foster care, specialized foster/adoptive care, group residential care, emergency shelter, etc. are to be handled at the state office only.

Regular Kinship/Relative

Kinship/relative provider care homes that have not been “certified” may be eligible for the TANF Child Only grant through the Office of Family Support. The family can fill out an application for these benefits with a Family Support Specialist within their

local DHHR. If the family is denied by the Office of Family Support, which may occur if there is no blood relation between the child(ren) and the family in whose home they have been placed. In these situations, the Department may provide a State Paid Kinship Care Placement Payment until the kinship provider is approved as a certified foster/adoptive parent provider. This would be achieved by the CPS worker completing monthly demand payments in the family or child's case in FACTS. The follow chart shows the TANF rate for kinship/relative placement:

		TANF Child Only Rates	**Per Child Rate**	**Rounding Difference**	**Daily Rate**
1	**Child**	**$262**	**$262.00**		**$8.61**
2	**Children**	**$301**	**$150.50**		**$9.90**
3	**Children**	**$340**	**$113.33**	**0.01**	**$11.18**
4	**Children**	**$384**	**$96.00**		**$12.62**
5	**Children**	**$420**	**$84.00**		**$13.81**
6	**Children**	**$460**	**$76.67**	**(0.02)**	**$15.12**
7	**Children**	**$497**	**$71.00**		**$16.34**
8	**Children**	**$508**	**$63.50**		**$16.70**

Burial Expenses

In the event that a child in foster care dies and there are no resources available to meet the need for funeral home services, a cemetery plot, and burial or cremation services, the child's worker may issue a demand payment in FACTS for up to $1800.00 to cover these expenses. Receipts or invoices are required before this payment can be issued. The receipts or invoices must be kept in the child's paper record and documented in FACTS in document tracking.

Child Care

Child care services are available for children in the state's custody when the foster/adoptive or relative/kinship parents are employed or participating in an educational program. Child care will only be provided to the family's foster children, not the biological or adopted children unless the family meets the income eligibility requirements of the child care program. All child care arrangements must be coordinated through the Child Care Resource and Referral (R & R) agency that covers the county in which the foster/adoptive or Relative/Kinship parent resides. The R & R staff will request the child's worker forward a copy of the child's birth certificate to them within 90 days of their request. In addition, relative/kinship caretakers must supply the R & R worker with a copy of the signed (by both the placement worker and relative/kinship provider) Kinship/Relative Safety Screen and the Child Placement Agreement (SS-FC-6A).

Initial Clothing Payment

All children who first enter foster care are entitled to an adequate wardrobe and are eligible to receive an initial clothing allowance at the time of placement.

The child's worker shall assess the child's initial placement clothing needs and complete the Placement Wardrobe and Personal Inventory form of the child's personal belongings. If a child does not have an adequate wardrobe at the time of initial entry into the foster care system, items of clothing may be purchased by the foster/adoptive parents or the facility. In considering the purchase of clothing, the child's worker should be aware of the usable clothing the child already possesses. The initial clothing purchase is not intended to completely outfit the child but only supply the child with immediate clothing necessities.

This clothing payment is to only be made when a child initially enters foster care. The child's worker is not to issue another clothing payment for a child if the child moves from one placement to the next. The child's clothing brought from his home and purchased with the initial clothing payment must follow the child. A child's initial foster care placement clothing allowance may be up to $300.00. However, children placed in Medicaid paid facilities, such as ICF/MRs (Potomac Center for example) and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities, will need to have their clothing reassessed twice a year. Children and youth placed in these facilities often gain or lose weight on a continuous basis due to prescribed medications. Medicaid reimburses room, board and supervision but not clothing. Workers will need to assess the youth's clothes when initially placing them in these facilities and every six months or so thereafter.

The initial clothing allowance can be approached and completed through two separate avenues. If the placement provider can expend the $300 they may purchase the child's clothing using their own funds with the expectation of reimbursement from the Department. The placement provider must supply the purchase receipt(s) to the child's worker. The child's worker will then use the Initial Clothing Allowance Demand Payment type to generate a payment to the child's placement provider. The placement provider may purchase clothing from different vendors as long as the total clothing purchase does not surpass the **$300 total** limit.

Many times the placement provider may not possess available funds to purchase the child's initial clothing. In these situations the child's worker may issue a BA-67 Clothing Voucher (not to exceed $300) which will be accepted by any vendor who has agreed to this form of payment. The BA-67 is a form of demand payment which allows a voucher to be presented to the vendor in lieu of funds provided by the placement provider. In some instances a placement provider may wish or need to purchase clothing from multiple vendors using the BA-67 voucher. If a placement provider wishes to split the $300 clothing allowance between multiple vendors the worker can generate multiple BA-67 vouchers to separate vendors as long as they do not exceed the **$300 total** clothing allowance limit.

Both forms of payment for the initial clothing allowance require the worker to enter the "clothing assistance" service in the child's service log screen in FACTS and they both also require a demand payment request.

Supplemental and Replacement Clothing

It is the foster/adoptive parents or facility's responsibility to maintain appropriate clothing for the child during the time of placement and to insure that the child has an adequate wardrobe available at the time of discharge. The foster/adoptive parents or the facility in which the child is placed must supplement the child's wardrobe with appropriate clothing or replace necessary clothing items. The foster/adoptive parents or facility's boarding care payment includes the cost of clothing for the child placed in their care. It is intended that through the use of the monthly clothing allowance provided each month as part of the child's boarding care payment, the foster/adoptive parent or the facility will be able to adequately clothe the child. Approximately fifteen percent (15%) of the monthly boarding care payments should be utilized for the child's clothing needs and other personal items.

The child's worker will update the Placement Wardrobe and Personal Inventory form of the child's personal belongings and evaluate the care and adequacy of the child's clothing provided by the foster/adoptive parent or the facility. The child's worker will observe the fit, quality, condition, cleanliness, attractiveness, and appropriateness of the clothing as well as the number of clothes available to the child. If the child does not have an adequate wardrobe, the child's worker must inform the foster/adoptive parent or the facility about the need for the foster/adoptive parent or facility to purchase clothing for the child.

All clothing and other personal items purchased for the child must follow the child when he is removed from a placement. It is the child's worker's responsibility to maintain an updated inventory of all the child's clothing and other personal items to ensure that the child's personal belongings remain with him. If for some reason the child does not take all of his clothing and/or personal belongings at the time of discharge, it shall be the joint responsibility of the child's worker and the foster/adoptive family or facility to make arrangements for returning the clothing and/or personal belongings to the child within ten (10) working days. During that period of time the provider is responsible for safeguarding the child's personal belongings insuring its availability to the child. Under no circumstances is it permissible for a foster/adoptive family or facility to keep a child's clothing or personal items when the child is discharged. Not returning a child's belongings to the child when he is discharged is grounds for a corrective action plan.

Continuing Education

A child in the care of the Department who has graduated from high school and has the interest and ability to pursue further education either in college or vocational school should be strongly encouraged to pursue their educational goals. The Department may support youth who are continuing their education up to age twenty-one (21) through the foster care program. Youth over the age of eighteen (18) must voluntarily elect to remain in foster care by signing the SS- FC-18 in order to be eligible for continued foster care services.

Generally, out of state schools and private institutions will not be approved. Only in those cases where it can be demonstrated that an out of state or private program is less costly than a comparable in-state program may the situation be approved. This approval must be given by the Foster Care Program Specialist. All avenues of financial aid shall be pursued prior to determining the amount the Department will

pay for a youth attending a post-secondary education or training program. The child, foster/adoptive parents, and the child's parents, if appropriate, should take the responsibility for the exploration of financial assistance.

School tuition and fees are to be paid directly to the school by the child's worker. The school must be set up as a provider and must forward an invoice for the complete amount of all required tuition, fees, room, board, books, etc. The child's worker will issue a demand payment in FACTS using the Post-Secondary Education payment type directly to the educational facility.

With the assistance of the financial aid officer of the school, the child's worker and the youth should determine what his expenses are likely to be including transportation, books, personal expenses, clothing, and any other required needs. This amount will be paid directly to the youth on a monthly basis as a personal allowance. This payment should not be over $200.00 per month unless the child's worker has prior written approval of the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant. The child's worker will need to set up a provider in FACTS in the child's name. The provider category will be Transitional Living Client and the provider type will be Transitional Living Client. Once the provider has been set up, the child's worker will enter the child into placement with this TL provider. This process will ensure that the child continues to receive his medical card and that the personal allowances can be made monthly. The child's worker will issue a demand payment directly to the child for his personal expenses using the Post-Secondary Education payment type in FACTS.

Court Costs/Legal Advertising

Payment for class II legal advertisements must include an invoice with the dates of publication. Other miscellaneous court costs that may occur such as service fees, costs of reproducing legal documents, out-of-state birth certificates, etc. may also be paid through a demand payment in FACTS. Receipts or invoices are required before this payment can be issued. The receipts or invoices must be kept in the parent's paper record and documented in FACTS in document tracking.

Foster Care Supplement/Special Rate

This payment type is used to reimburse foster/adoptive parents for actual extraordinary or unusual expenses for an individual child. Examples of expenses that would qualify are: those incurred from a medically prescribed diet that is not covered through another program or an extra pair of glasses (that Medicaid would not

cover) for a child. Payments using this type are always to be considered policy exceptions and prior approval is required before proceeding to payment. This payment type may be amended to include payment to DHHR providers for a child's care when his behavior necessitates special service in terms of amount of time, vigilance and/or effort on the part of the foster parents. ***The child's special needs must be documented and prior approval from the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant must be received.***

Health Examination - Foster/Adoptive Parent

Payment can be made to reimburse DHHR foster/adoptive parents for the cost of their physical exams at the Medicaid rate. This payment is for physical exams only. **If a psychological assessment becomes necessary to determine the mental health of prospective foster/adoptive parent, this payment type may be utilized if a waiver was granted by the Regional Program Manager or Child Welfare Consultant authorizing the psychological assessment.**

In-Service Training

To assist DHHR foster/adoptive parents in complying with the ongoing training requirements, mileage, tuition and/or fees can be reimbursed.

Respite Care Payment

The purpose of respite care is to make available to foster/adoptive parents an opportunity to have time away from care taking responsibilities. All DHHR foster/adoptive parents have fourteen (14) days of respite care available each year. This time may be taken all at once or scattered over the year. The foster/adoptive family must find a certified respite provider or another certified foster/adoptive family to care for the child while the foster/adoptive parent is on respite. **This is an ASO Service. Provider must be enrolled as an ASO Provider in order to provide these services or receive payment for these services. The service is Daily Respite. The Homefinding Specialist may enroll the DHHR foster/adoptive provider for this service.**

School Clothing Allowance

School age children in family foster/adoptive care and independent living are provided a clothing allowance at the beginning of each school year to help cover the

costs of clothing needed. This payment is automatic and is provided directly to the foster/adoptive parent.

This payment type can also be used to issue clothing allowance to a child in care who is eligible but did not receive the automatic school clothing allowance payment. These payments are not to exceed the yearly authorized amount and should only be for children who were in the placement after the 31st of July in any given year.

Transportation of Foster Children

Department foster/adoptive parents may be reimbursed for the costs of transporting foster children to visits with the biological parents/family, pre- adoptive visits with the potential adoptive family, MDT's, court hearings, staffings, IEP's, adoption promotion activities, pre-placement visits, and foster parent visitation with youth in treatment/detention facility. The rate of reimbursement shall be based on the prevailing rate established by the WV Travel Management Office. **This is an ASO Service. Provider must be enrolled as an ASO Provider in order to provide these services or receive payment for these services. The Homefinding Specialist may enroll the DHHR foster/adoptive provider for this service.**

Department foster/adoptive parents may also be reimbursed for the costs of transporting foster children to medical appointments using the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT). **This payment is obtained through the Office of Family Support**.

In order to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their families, including parents, siblings and other relatives, child protective services and youth services families may be reimbursed for the costs of the visitation. Payment can also be made to a vendor to provide transportation for the parent to participate in services/treatment, office visits, Multidisciplinary Treatment Team meetings, reviews and court hearings. **This is an ASO Service. Parent/Provider must be enrolled as an ASO Provider in order to provide these services or receive payment for these services.**

Foster/adoptive parents may not be reimbursed for "routine transportation activities", such as transporting to school, church, recreational activities, ect…

Tutoring

Payment for supplemental education required by a child placed in a department foster care home. This is an ASO Service and requires a documented need from the school**.**

Water Testing

Payment to reimburse foster/adoptive providers for water testing required to complete home study of residences drawing their water from any source other than a municipal water supply. Payment may not to exceed $50.00.

Review of Payments and Licensing Standards

The Department shall review the following at least once every five years, making revisions when necessary or convenient and causing a report to be made to the Secretary of DHHR, commencing in 2012;

1. the licensing rules and policies for foster and adoptive family and residential providers, and;

2. the amount of the payment made for foster care maintenance and adoption assistance to assure their continued appropriateness.