

# STANDARD FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND LICENSING OF RESOURCE PARENTS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard is to provide direction and guidance to the Child and Family Services (CFS) program regarding timely response to inquiries from individuals interested in becoming a resource parent; the training, assessment and licensing requirements for the resource family; and the use of the Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) Program in recruiting and mentoring prospective resource parents. This standard is intended to achieve statewide consistency in the development and application of CFS core services and will be implemented in the context of all applicable laws, rules and policies. The standard will also provide a measurement for program accountability.

## INTRODUCTION

For purposes of this standard, recruitment is defined broadly and is results-based. The standard is written to improve responses to parents who inquire about children in care as a result of state and regional recruitment efforts. It highlights practice standards adapted from *The Practitioner's Guide of the Answering the Call* series (AdoptUsKids, Judith and John McKenzie Consulting, Inc.) that direct the recruitment team to be responsive to the concerns of parents and reduce the time it takes them to become foster and adoptive parents during the six steps of recruitment.

## TERMS

### **Dual Assessment**

Another name for the Resource Family Foster/Adoptive Home Study used to evaluate a prospective family who has applied to become licensed to provide foster care and/or adoption. This dual home study process incorporates the components of the PRIDE mutual assessment process.

### **Fictive Kin or Kin Placement**

A type of foster care placement where a licensed fictive kin is willing to accept for placement from the child welfare program. Fictive kin or kin are non-relatives who have a significant, family-like relationship with a child which existed prior to the child entering foster care. Fictive kin or kin may include godparents, close family friends, clergy, teachers or members of a child's Indian tribe.

### **General Placement**

A type of placement where a licensed family is willing to accept for placement, from the Idaho child welfare program, one or more unrelated children for the purpose of providing alternate care.

### **Idaho Central Registry**

An iCARE database of individuals who have received a valid or substantiated disposition on a referral of child abuse or neglect in Idaho.

### **Mutual Assessment of Resource Families**

An assessment of families or individuals applying to be licensed as a resource family. The assessment consists of no less than one consultation with the potential resource family and focuses on the five PRIDE competency categories. The assessment coincides with the content of the pre-service training. Information gathered during this assessment is used in matching the needs of children with the resource family's skills and experiences. During this assessment, the family may self-select out of the licensing process or may be counseled out of the process by the Resource Family Specialist.

### **Personal Care Services (PCS) Placement**

A type of foster care placement where a licensed family, certified to provide Personal Care Services, is willing to accept for placement, a child who qualifies for Personal Care Services through Medicaid and whose custody is either with the child welfare program or with a parent or other legal guardian.

### **Pre-Adopt Placement**

A type of placement in which a family with a positive dual or adoption study is willing to accept placement of a child for the purpose of adoption from the child welfare program. Sometimes this type of placement is referred to as a concurrent planning placement (family available for both foster care and adoption).

### **Pre-service Training**

The twenty-seven (27) hours of PRIDE pre-service training as well as the Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care Workshop: An Introduction to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard and Youth Bill of Rights are required prior to licensure as a resource family.

### **PRIDE Competency Categories**

The knowledge and skills resource parents need to perform successfully the tasks of foster and adoptive care. The PRIDE program has established the following five (5) essential competency categories which drive the entire mutual assessment, selection, preparation, support, and development process:

- (1) Protecting and nurturing children;
- (2) Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays;
- (3) Supporting relationships between children and their families;
- (4) Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
- (5) Working as a member of a professional team.

### **Recruitment**

Includes all outreach, educational and supportive activities that an agency uses to interest and help an individual and/or family become a foster and/or adoptive parent. This includes all activities from outreach and/or first contact to placement of a child with a licensed parent.

### **Resource Peer Mentor (RPM)**

A recruitment and retention effort that hires experienced foster/adoptive/kinship parents to provide knowledge, experience, and expertise specific to the resource family role. Resource Peer Mentors provide general, targeted and specific recruitment support activities as well as train, teach and mentor current and prospective resource families about the foster care system.

### **Relative Placement**

A type of foster care placement where a licensed relative is willing to accept for placement from the child welfare program. A relative is a person related to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption (i.e. grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, great aunt, uncle, great uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, first cousin, sibling and half-sibling).

### **Resource Family Specialist**

An individual, also known as licensing worker, who is responsible for the following:

- Recruitment and assessment of resource families;
- PRIDE pre-service training of resource families;
- Support and retention of resource families;
- Engaging the resource family in completing the Professional Family Development Plan; and
- In some cases, participate as a team member of the placement decision-making team.

### **Respite Care**

Time-limited care provided to children. Respite care is utilized in circumstances which require short term, temporary care of a child by a licensed or agency-approved caregiver different from his usual caregiver. The duration of an episode of respite care ranges from one (1) partial day up to fourteen (14) consecutive days. (IDAPA 16.06.01.012.16)

### **Standard IDHW Criminal History Background Check**

A national fingerprint-based criminal history background check, sanctioned by Department rule and consisting of a web-based application and scheduling of fingerprints of the individual, Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) records, the National Criminal History Background Check (NCIC), Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI), the Idaho Child Abuse Central Registry, Idaho Adult Protection Registry, Idaho Sexual Offender Registry, Idaho Department of Transportation, and Medicaid exclusion list. This background check is required when IDHW is issuing a foster care license or for adoption purposes.

### **Treatment Foster Care Placement**

A type of foster care placement where a certified and licensed family is willing to accept for placement, from the Idaho child welfare program, one or two children (at one time) with mental health and behavioral needs for the purpose of providing therapeutic intervention within the family's licensed home.

### **Variance**

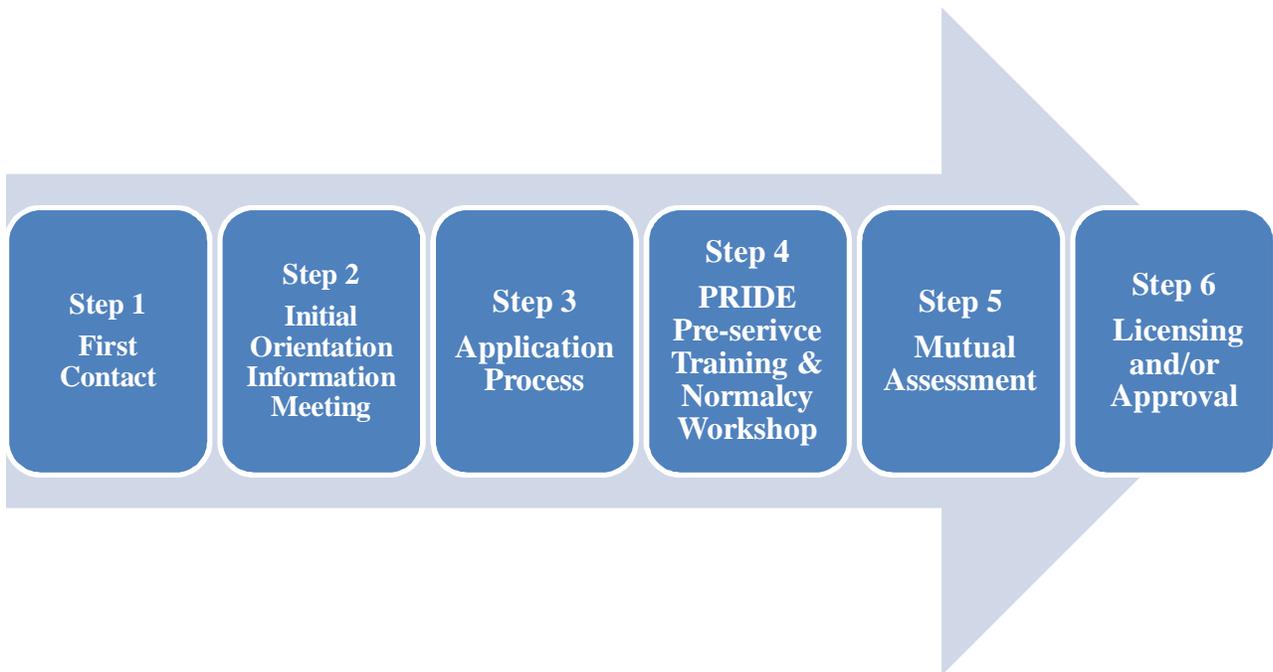
A means of complying with the intent and purpose of a licensing rule in a manner other than that specifically prescribed in the rule (IDAPA 16.06.02.102.04a-e). A variance is time-limited and may be considered for relatives, fictive kin, and non-relative resource families on a case-by-case basis.

### **Waiver**

The non-application or waiving of a non-safety foster care licensing rule (IDAPA 16.06.02.102.03a-e) which serves to promote a child’s well-being, while not compromising their safety. A waiver may be extended to a **relative** resource family only.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARD**

Recruitment is presented in six steps beginning with the first call to when a family is licensed or approved for the placement of a child.



This section will address both the desired outcomes and the practice standards for the six steps of recruitment. It is important to note that a strict linear sequence of activities is not envisioned. As an example, many tasks of the application process, such as references and child abuse and neglect registry checks, will run concurrently with the first two steps. The activities are described separately as it is valuable to understand the particular practice standards of each step.

## **Step 1: First Contact**

Desired outcomes for first contact:

- The prospective parent feels welcomed and encouraged;
- CFS gets basic information and answers questions;
- Inquiry and data information about the prospective parent is logged;
- Packet of information is sent;
- The prospective parent is motivated to attend an Initial Orientation Information Meeting; and
- The prospective parent has the name and phone number of a live person to contact for questions and support.

## **Guidelines for Step 1: First Contact**

The CareLine 211 number will be the contact number published on all recruitment materials and online so that calls in response to recruitment efforts will come to the CareLine Recruitment Response Team via telephone, email, or web inquiry form and/or application. If the prospective parent calls the region directly without contacting CareLine, the designated CFS regional response individual will provide the same response and documentation as specified below.

In response to the inquiry, CareLine or the CFS designated regional response individual, will request and document the following demographic information on all inquiries (face-to-face, telephone, email and web):

- Interest in foster care and/or adoption;
- Contact information (name, address, telephone and email).
- How prospective family heard about the program (television, radio, newspaper/magazine, flyer/brochure, phone book or information, DHW/District Health, special mailing/letter, other foster parent, billboard, One Church One Child Program, place of worship, or other); and

During the inquiry contact, CareLine, or the designated CFS regional response individual, will either direct the prospective parent to the Foster/Adoptive Parent Website ([www.fostercare.dhw.idaho.gov](http://www.fostercare.dhw.idaho.gov)) and online application or mail the *Family Guide*, welcome letter and the Initial Orientation Information Meeting schedule to the prospective parent. Both the website and *Family Guide* include:

- Introduction to the child welfare foster/adopt program;
- Summary of the basic qualifications the prospective parent needs to become licensed or approved;
- Information on the children who need homes (age, racial/ethnic backgrounds and needs);
- Overview of the six-step licensing process (First Contact, Informational Meetings, Application Process, Pre-Service Training, Mutual Assessment and Licensing);
- Information regarding the criminal history process (includes Child Abuse and Neglect Registry);
- Frequently Asked Questions;
- Information regarding Initial Orientation Information Meetings and the PRIDE pre-service training process; and

- Online Statewide Dual Application (see Step 3: Application Process).

CareLine will provide a weekly report to the designated CFS regional response individual that includes all foster care and adoption inquiries, contact information and demographic information processed through CareLine that week.

**iCARE NOTE:** CFS will log each inquiry call into iCARE as a pending licensing inquiry presenting issue (PI). The PI remains open for reporting purposes. After the prospective family is licensed, the iCARE Resource is attached to the PI. The PI is closed only when the prospective family withdraws their interest, does not submit their application to the program after sixty (60) days (unless another specific date is mutually agreed to), is screened out of the program, or following a license closure.

The person inquiring about foster care or adoption shall be contacted (personal visit or follow up telephone call) within forty-eight (48) business hours of the receipt of the weekly report by either a designated CFS regional staff or Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) to provide:

- Response to questions;
- Assistance with application process (web based or hard copy application, criminal history process, references);
- Share upcoming dates of training and/or Initial Orientation Information Meetings; and
- Provide business card for ongoing contact.

CFS will put the prospective parent on a mailing list and/or data base for an invitation to the next scheduled Initial Orientation Information Meeting and future contact or follow-up.

A personal visit and/or follow-up call by CFS or Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) should take place within thirty (30) days after the first contact if no response is received from the prospective resource parent.

Both CFS staff and the Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) shall document their contacts with the prospective family. The RPM will document the information and forward it to the designated CFS regional response individual. The CFS staff will document their contact, as well as the RPM documentation, under the narrative on the iCARE Presenting Issue (PI).

## **Step 2: Initial Orientation Information Meeting**

Desired outcomes for Initial Orientation Information Meeting include:

- The prospective parent walks away with a good basic understanding of
  - Who the children are that need care,
  - The role and responsibilities of foster/adoptive parents,
  - The process they need to go through for licensure or approval, and
  - Awareness of the next steps, and desire to continue with the process;
- A foundation is established for a mutually respectful relationship with the prospective parent;
- The prospective parent understands the process for scheduling PRIDE pre-service training; and

- The prospective parent understands other ways to support children in foster care even if they choose not to become licensed resource parents.

### **Guidance for Step 2: Initial Orientation Information Meeting**

CFS or the assigned Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) will make a follow-up call and/or send flyer to encourage prospective parents to come to an Initial Orientation Information Meeting.

The purpose of the Initial Orientation Information Meeting is to give interested persons an opportunity to learn more about the resource parent program and to decide if they wish to continue with the application process and pre-service training. Attendance at this meeting shall meet the criteria for an orientation found in IDAPA 16.06.02.408.01.

The Initial Orientation Information Meeting should be organized as a reception or open house and should include Resource Peer Mentors to help welcome prospective parents and provide information. During the Initial Orientation Information Meeting:

- Review the six-step process and answer questions regarding the application and mutual assessment process;
- Provide a brief description of the types of care (general, relative/fictive kin, pre-adopt, concurrent, respite and treatment);
- Review the role of the resource parents and the importance of reunification efforts;
- Review the requirements for foster care licensure and why background checks are necessary;
- Encourage prospective parents to provide their personal and medical references contact information to CFS as soon as possible; and
- Encourage prospective parents to complete their application as required to attend PRIDE pre-service training.

It is important to be sensitive to the prospective parents' sense of time during this step. The longer it takes to move from step to step, the less likely the family will stay in the process. Families may experience self-doubt and fears as they learn about the challenges of fostering and adopting and the complexity and length of the process if they do not have some way to maintain a connection and obtain reassurance. This is a critical stage where families may self-select out, some for good reasons, but others may opt out who would have been good resource parents.

See FACS SharePoint Teamsite - Resource Family Recruitment for the Initial Orientation Information Meeting Toolkit.

### **Step 3: Statewide Dual Application Process**

Desired outcomes for statewide dual application process:

- Application proceeds concurrently with first and second steps, so as to reduce the total time to placement;
- Application does not request information already gathered during steps one and two;
- Application is filled out completely, accurately and quickly;
- Potential eligibility concerns are identified and resolved early in the process; and

- Applicants understand the process and are provided with the help they need from start to completion, e.g., language, filling out forms, getting references, medical, legal and other records.

### **Guidelines for Step 3: Application Process**

The application process is concurrent with step one-first contact and step two-initial orientation information meetings so as to reduce the total time to placement. The application process is described separately here as it is valuable to understand its specific requirements.

According to IDAPA Rules Governing Child Care Licensing Standards, CFS must *initiate* action upon each completed application within thirty (30) days (IDAPA 16.06.02.102). Actions include those in steps one and two of the recruitment process above.

CFS must provide approved, statewide application packets only at Step 3 so as to keep the paperwork as simple as possible while meeting all the necessary requirements. Additional or modified paperwork is not permitted by this standard. The approved statewide dual application includes:

- Section A. Identifying Information and Release/Consent
- Section B. Life History
- Section C. Home and Environment
- Section D. Financial Statement
- Section E. References

Provide special assistance, e.g. Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) and/or translator, for applicants who need a translator or help in reading or writing. Applicants should be encouraged to provide reference contact information as soon as possible.

Prospective resource parents must have the written application completed prior to step four, PRIDE Pre-Service Training, to allow time to eliminate potential issues in advance and reduce overall wait time.

As the application and other information is received, it is important to approach the screening of prospective parents with the underlying principle of “screening families in” rather than “screening families out.” Consistent with family-centered practice principles, CFS should work collaboratively and creatively in partnership with prospective families to address their needs and build on their strengths through the use of training and support.

As the application is received, the designated CFS staff will concurrently request Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Check(s), Standard IDHW Criminal History Background Check(s), and personal and medical references.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry Checks**

A check of the Idaho Central Registry will be conducted for each adult residing in the prospective resource parent home. The Idaho Central Registry check is completed by the Criminal History Unit (CHU) as a part of the Standard IDHW Criminal History Background Check. Additionally, the Adam Walsh Protection and Safety Act of 2006 requires a check of the

child abuse and neglect central registry in each state the prospective resource parent(s) and any other adult(s) living in the home have resided in during the preceding five (5) years. All registry checks must be made regardless of whether Title IV-E foster care maintenance payment or adoption assistance payments are to be made on behalf of the child.

Checks of other states' child abuse and neglect registries are made by the Resource Family Specialist or other designated CFS staff in the region. The current list of state contacts for out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry checks is maintained on the Foster Care SharePoint. Registry information is held confidential and is only disclosed pursuant to the written consent of the person whose name appears on the registry. Any fees paid to another state to gain access to information in a state-maintained child abuse and neglect registry may be reimbursed as a direct Title IV-E administrative cost.

If during the process of checking child abuse and neglect registries, any adult member of the household is found to have a valid or substantiated report involving child abuse/neglect, no further action shall be taken to license the family until all background information is received and the Department has completed a review to determine suitability of the applicant to be licensed as a resource family.

### **IDHW Criminal History Background Checks**

Although a child may be placed in a home prior to completing the fingerprint-based criminal records check, as in the case of an expedited relative or fictive kin placement (see *Standard for Expedited Relative and Fictive Kin Placements*), the Social Security Act, Idaho Code and IDAPA Administrative Rule requires CFS to complete a fingerprint-based criminal history background check of all adult household members **before licensing** a prospective resource family.

All members of the prospective parent's household, eighteen (18) years of age or older, must start the criminal history background check process by logging onto the CHU website at <https://chu.dhw.idaho.gov>. The adult household members must be provided with the agency number assigned to the Region by CHU before they can access the criminal history unit application (Agency #'s are included on the online application website). Once the applicant completes the online application, appointments for fingerprinting are scheduled online. The criminal history background check is initiated when the applicant has submitted his/her fingerprints. The online application alone will not begin the criminal history background check. CFS will verify status of the criminal history background clearance from the Criminal History Unit's database. Verification will include a letter which can be printed from the website or a screen print of the status page stating the applicant's background check is completed and clearance received. The screen print or copy of the letter must be filed in the prospective family's licensing file.

If during the process of checking criminal history background, any adult member of the household is found to have a criminal conviction or withheld judgment for a misdemeanor or felony, no further action shall be taken to license the family until all background information is received and the Department has completed a review to determine suitability of the applicant to be licensed as a resource family.

CFS will not approve or license any prospective resource parent, or claim federal funding for homes, where the prospective resource parent has been convicted of a *disqualifying offense* involving, but not limited to (See IDAPA 16.05.06.210.01):

- Child Abuse Registry listing Level 1 or 2;
- Spousal abuse;
- A crime against a child(ren) (including child pornography); or,
- A homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery.

If an adult member of the household is found to have a disqualifying offense, they will be issued an *unconditional denial* and not allowed to be licensed. A CHU applicant has thirty (30) days to challenge the Department's unconditional denial by submitting in writing and providing court records or other information which demonstrate the Department's unconditional denial is incorrect. These documents must be filed with Criminal History Unit.

CFS will not approve or license any prospective resource parent, or claim federal funding for homes where, based on a criminal history background check, a court has determined that the prospective resource parent has been convicted of a *disqualifying five-year offense*, involving, but not limited to (See IDAPA 16.05.06.210.02):

- Physical assault;
- Battery;
- Any felony not described on the permanent disqualifying offenses; or,
- A drug-related offense.

The Criminal History Unit will issue a *conditional denial* for disqualifying five-year offenses. If a conditional denial is issued, the applicant may request an exemption review hearing to have the matter reviewed by an exemption review officer. The exemption review provides the prospective resource parent and the Department the opportunity to discuss the circumstances around the criminal or child/adult abuse history. The prospective resource parent also is able to present additional information to the hearing officer regarding the items found during the background check. An exemption review is not an option if a disqualifying offense (unconditional denial) is found.

### **Personal and Medical References**

CFS must have the completed consent form, from Section A of the Dual Application, in hand, prior to seeking reference information.

A medical statement for each prospective resource parent, signed by a qualified medical professional, within the twelve (12) month period prior to initial licensure, must be received and considered by the agency prior to full licensure. The medical statement must indicate the prospective resource parent is in such physical and mental health so as to not adversely affect either the health or quality of care for children placed in the home.

**NOTE:** At no time should the prospective parents be the responsible party for providing reference surveys to their listed contacts. However if it is necessary for the prospective parent to undergo a new physical in the event their last medical contact exceeds twelve (12) months

(IDAPA 16.06.02.405.01.c), they may bring a medical reference survey to their new appointment for completion by the physician or their designee. In these cases, CFS should provide a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope along with the medical reference survey to the prospective parent.

The agency must receive three (3) satisfactory personal references, one (1) of which may be from a person related to the prospective resource parent(s). The agency may request, per IDAPA Rule, additional references if needed. In lieu of written references, phone interviews documented by the Resource Family Specialist are also acceptable.

#### **Step 4: PRIDE Foster/Adopt Pre-Service Training**

Desired outcomes from PRIDE Pre-service Training:

- Prospective parents will understand the requirements and competencies necessary to working as a member of the child welfare team;
- Prospective parents will develop new understanding of parenting skills related to children in foster care;
- Prospective parents will have sufficient information to make an informed decision about whether to select in to the foster care program;
- Prospective parents will know what type of child they can best parent and what type of resource parent they will be, e.g., foster, adoptive, respite, concurrent planning; and
- Prospective parents will have a foundational understanding of the importance of normalcy for children and youth in foster care and the application of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- CFS will begin the mutual assessment process.

#### **Guidance for Step 4: PRIDE Foster/Adopt Pre-Service Training**

CFS uses the Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) Model for developing and supporting resource parents. PRIDE is designed to strengthen the quality of care by providing a standardized, consistent, structured framework for the competency-based recruitment, preparation, and selection of resource parent as well as the ongoing professional development of resource parents.

The prospective family must complete a one hour orientation (IDAPA 16.06.02.408.01), the Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care Workshop: An Introduction to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard and Youth Bill of Rights and twenty-seven (27) hours of PRIDE pre-service training. The one hour orientation includes discussion about the children in need of care, the licensing process and the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. **The required orientation can be achieved concurrently with Step 2: Initial Orientation Information Meeting or during this Step 4: PRIDE pre-service training.** The PRIDE pre-service training includes nine (9) training sessions to be conducted simultaneously with, and as an integral part of, the family assessment process. The training presents information about the needs of children in foster care and adoption, and the beginning competencies families must have to meet those needs.

Prospective resource parents must complete the Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care Workshop: An Introduction to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard and Youth Bill of Rights prior to the second session of the PRIDE pre-service training. Resource parents are expected to attend all twenty-seven (27) hours of training missing no more than one (1) session. In two-parent households, if one parent is unable to attend all pre-service training sessions due to his/her work schedule, arrangements will be made to offer PRIDE pre-service training through alternative methods (see *Special Licensing Considerations*, Page 16), such as:

- Varying the schedule of PRIDE pre-service training;
- Arranging for the individual to attend PRIDE pre-service training in a neighboring region if it accommodates their schedule; or,
- Arrange for self-directed learning using the PRIDE curriculum.

Both parents in a two-parent household are required to participate in the consultations and mutual assessment. Homework assigned during the training must be completed for each session.

PRIDE Pre-Service Training and the Normalcy Workshop will be documented in iCARE to track the completion of trainings.

Individuals who have been licensed in another state and participated in that state's training program may still be expected to attend and participate in the Normalcy workshop and PRIDE pre-service training to learn about program issues specific to Idaho. The regional program manager has the ability to review the family's previous training and, on a case-by-case basis, grant a PRIDE training variance if the family's training is shown to be substantially equivalent (see *Special Licensing Considerations*, this document Page 16).

The resource family application must be completed and submitted to CFS prior to the applicant being registered to attend PRIDE pre-service training. This will allow time to eliminate potential issues in advance or reduce overall wait time. **NOTE: The personal and medical references, child abuse and neglect registry checks, and criminal history clearances are not required to be completed prior to beginning PRIDE pre-service training.** Mutual assessment is an ongoing process that extends throughout the steps. At any time, during PRIDE pre-service training or the remaining steps, the agency and/or prospective family may decide to either select in or select out before completion of the process. A family or agency either "selecting in" or "selecting out" during the PRIDE pre-service training should be considered an expected part of the mutual assessment process and not an impediment to the training or remaining participants.

Generally, only persons committed to caring for children placed by CFS will be enrolled in PRIDE pre-service training. Resource families licensed by agencies other than CFS that do not accept placement of children by CFS are not required to attend PRIDE pre-service training. When CFS is placing with tribal entities, with alternate care providers in other states, or in other unique situations not requiring licensure by CFS, attendance or completion of PRIDE pre-service training is not required.

**NOTE: When an Idaho family is selected for the adoption of a CFS child, but the family was not previously licensed, the family will be expected to satisfactorily complete**

**the Normalcy Workshop and PRIDE pre-service training and become licensed as a resource family. However, the pre-adoptive placement of the child will not be delayed pending completion of the PRIDE pre-service training requirement.**

Following a prospective family's successful completion of PRIDE Pre-Service Training, CFS staff shall assign a Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) to meet with the PRIDE graduate(s) to accomplish the following tasks with the prospective parent awaiting completion of the mutual assessment and licensure:

- Introduction of the Parent Interest Survey to be completed and discussed with the Resource Family Specialist;
- Support in addressing home environment needs;
- Education regarding process and resources related to:
  - Respite Care
  - Child Care
  - Reimbursement
  - Life Books
  - Record Keeping/Documentation
  - Discipline Policy
  - Recreation Policy
  - Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard
  - Emergency Plans
  - Resource Family Plan/Cooperative Agreement
  - Resource Family Professional Development Plan
  - Confidentiality
  - ID Badges; and
- Connection to Training and Support Group and further training.

Individuals who do not want to adopt or foster a child with special needs in the custody of IDHW should be referred to a licensed adoption agency or a certified adoption professional (CAP) for a private adoption home study and/or PRIDE pre-service training.

If a family or individual going through the PRIDE pre-service training should select out of the program, a written assessment will not be completed and a signed letter of withdrawal should be placed in the file.

### **Ongoing Training and Skill Building for Resource Parents**

**Professional Family Development Plans.** The purpose of completing the Professional Family Development Plan (PFDP) with resource parents is to:

- Assess the resource family's continued learning needs and annual training goals;
- Identify non-training barriers to the resource family's performance of the essential tasks of fostering;
- Develop a plan to build upon the resource family's strengths, knowledge and skills;
- Identify support the agency can provide for the development of the resource parent; and
- Guide planning for enhancing the development and competencies of resource parents.

A Family Development Plan (FDP) will be written in collaboration with the resource family. The initial Family Development Plan will be completed with the resource family within one (1) month from the approval for licensure.

The Family Development Plan (FDP) and progress toward meeting plan objectives will be evaluated at least annually or otherwise as necessary to support the development of core competencies.

**Ongoing Training and Licensure.** Resource parents must complete ten (10) hours of training annually that supports the goals of their Professional Family Development Plan (PFDP). CFS will advise resource parents of training opportunities as they become available. It is the responsibility of the resource family to document any training they have participated in directly on their Professional Family Development Plan and report the training to the Resource Family Specialist no later than their annual licensing review.

Failure to complete the required ten (10) hours of annual training may result in revocation of the resource family license.

Training and skill building training for resource families will be documented in iCARE to track resource parent's training.

### **Step 5: Mutual Assessment**

Desired outcomes for Mutual Assessment:

- Both the Resource Development Specialist and prospective parent know whether placement will or will not work for the family;
- Parents and their household members are prepared and ready to proceed with placement; and
- The process is a strengths-based process (process to rule in, not out of the process).

### **Guidelines for Step 5: Mutual Assessment**

A home study must be completed on the applicant family (IDAPA 16.06.02.405). Both the content of the PRIDE pre-service sessions and the content of the mutual family assessment process are based on the five PRIDE competency categories. Prospective resource parents will be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of the PRIDE competencies.

The Resource Family Specialist or contractor shall prepare for the assessment by reviewing all the material available on the family to date including, but not limited to: the application, notes from initial meetings and pre-service; medical references, personal references, background checks, and PRIDE Connections Homework completed by the family during training.

The PRIDE mutual assessment model includes one or more mutual assessment meetings and a final at-home consultation for decision making. The number of meetings needed to complete the assessment process will vary according to the needs of the family, the number of family members, the complexities of the issues that must be explored, and the length of each meeting. All applicants for licensure as a resource family will participate in as many

consultations as necessary to determine their knowledge, understanding and ability to demonstrate the five PRIDE competencies as determined by the Resource Family Specialist or contractor. **The family assessment must include a written recommendation for licensure and approval as a resource parent and/or adoptive parent. The assessment should be completed within sixty (60) days of completion of PRIDE for general foster families, or placement of a child under an expedited relative or fictive kin placement. If the resource family has extenuating circumstances that prevent the timely completion of the written assessment, this time frame may be extended to ninety (90) days.**

The aim of the dual family assessment is to streamline procedures, avoid delays and minimize the moves of foster children. A dual family assessment allows a family to do two things, provide foster care and be an adoptive parent. The dual family assessment means that all prospective resource parents (foster and adoptive) go through the same screening and interview, mutual assessment, training and background check processes, and in the end receive the same approval to provide foster and/or adoptive care. The dual family assessment allows for a resource parent, who has cared for a child for some length of time, to naturally and easily change their role from that of a foster parent to an adoptive parent, without having to go through an additional screening, assessment, and training process.

During the mutual assessment, the Resource Family Specialist shall explore the family's expectations of foster and/or adoptive parenting and the realities of how that will fit with their family life. There will be a discussion of the expectations of the agency, and the realities of the role. As a result of this process, the final decision should be made to reflect the family's ability and willingness to foster or adopt. In keeping with family centered practice principles, CFS should work collaboratively and creatively in partnership with prospective families to address their needs and build on their strengths through the use of training and support. The goal of PRIDE pre-service training is that resource parents will be competent at the first two levels of learning (awareness and understanding). It is part of child welfare's role to guide and support resource parents through the learning process and enhance the competencies of its resource parents.

A Home Environment Standards Checklist must be completed during the mutual assessment process to determine compliance with Child Care Licensing Standards as they relate to the safety and suitability of the family's home.

### **Re-licensure Assessment**

According to IDAPA, annual re-licensure assessments must be completed and documentation must show how the resource home continues to meet the standards for licensure and approval. Consideration must be given to each point of the standards, including a review of the previous study and original application to determine what changes have occurred.

An application for renewal of a license must be made by the resource parent(s) and completed prior to the expiration date of the license currently in effect. When such application for renewal has been made in the proper manner and form, the existing license will, unless officially revoked, remain in effect until the Department has acted on the application for renewal.

**NOTE: Resource Family Specialists shall assess all families for dual licensure unless the prospective family specifically requests not to do so.**

### **Step 6: Licensing**

Desired outcomes for Licensing:

- Timely completion of the written assessment and other licensing/approval paperwork;
- Timely and efficient licensing/approval process; and
- Parents are provided with a copy of their home study and are given a chance to correct any inaccuracies prior to being finalized.

### **Guidelines for Step 6: Licensing**

To comply with requirements and assure the safety of children placed in foster care, the Resource Family Specialist must document completion of the steps in the narrative of the Foster Family Profile screen located in iCARE. A resource family (foster care) license is considered to be effective only after *all of the following requirements* have been completed and documented:

1. Respond to inquiry;
2. Respond to application;
3. Receive child abuse and neglect registry clearances;
4. Receive Criminal History clearances;
5. Complete Home Environment Standards Checklist;
6. Provide Foster/Adopt PRIDE pre-service training;
7. Complete Mutual Family Assessment;
8. Review Agreements; and
9. Issue License

When all steps have been completed, the date the license is issued (effective date) is recorded on the Foster Family License screen located in iCARE. For more iCARE information please see the e-manual located on the IDHW iCARE SharePoint at [http://manuals/FACS/FOCUS\\_eManual/FOCUS\\_eManual.htm](http://manuals/FACS/FOCUS_eManual/FOCUS_eManual.htm).

**NOTE: The license effective date may not be prior to the date the actual fingerprint-based criminal history check(s) is completed and all licensing standards are met either as required or with an approved waiver or variance. All license requirements must be met regardless of whether the resource family is licensed by CFS staff or a contractor.**

The Resource Family Specialist will obtain the resource parent(s) signature on the dual home study. Resource parents will be provided with a copy of the final, signed home study.

The Resource Family Specialist will advise the resource parent of the ability to have their dual assessment included on the Permanency SharePoint if they wish to be considered for pre-adoptive placements statewide.

If at any time before or after the issuance of a resource family license, CFS receives or discovers information concerning the safety and suitability of a family for licensure, CFS retains the authority to deny or revoke a license where such action is determined to be in the best interest. To deny or revoke a license, CFS must advise the prospective or licensed resource parent, in writing, of the notice and basis of revocation as well as their right to request a hearing to appeal

the decision within thirty (30) days through the Administrative Procedures Section of IDHW pursuant to Idaho Code 39-1218(2).

## **SPECIAL LICENSING CONSIDERATIONS**

**Placing Children in Homes Licensed By a Tribe.** Licensing or approval of resource homes by an Indian tribe is equivalent to licensing or approval by the State in terms of *placement*. When placing a child in a foster home licensed by the tribe, it is not necessary to re-license the tribal foster home. However, in order for the state to claim Title IV-E foster care maintenance or adoption assistance payments through Title IV-E, the Department must first verify that the tribal licensing process includes the safety precautions of a fingerprint-based criminal history background check and a child abuse and neglect central registry check prior to using Title IV-E funds to pay for the placement. Staff should consult with their supervisor in determining the most appropriate funding source for payments prior to verification of the criminal history and registry requirements. Appropriate funding sources may include a TANF relative grant, Social Services Block Grant funds, or General Funds.

**Waivers.** According to federal and state policy, a state's licensing standards must be applied to all resource family homes licensed or approved by the state; however, special situations may arise where there are grounds for a waiver of an IDAPA Administrative Rule or Standard of Practice for a relative on behalf of a foster child. The term waiver, as it applies to resource family licensure, is defined as the non-application of a licensing standard extended to a relative resource family which serves to promote a child's well-being while not compromising their safety. Examples of non-safety foster care standards which may be considered for a waiver include, but may not be limited to: training requirements; bedroom and sleeping arrangements; and space requirements. To consider the waiver of a foster care standard for any relative family, the following requirements must be satisfied:

- A waiver must only be considered for a relative resource family as defined in IDAPA. No waiver may be approved for fictive kin or non-relatives;
- A waiver may only be considered on an individual basis;
- Only non-safety related standards may be waived. The standards related to safety may not be waived;
- Waivers must be approved by the CFS Program Manager, Lead Chief, or their designee, and the approval must indicate its applicability only to the specific relative child; and
- The continuing appropriateness of a waiver must be reviewed, approved and documented in the family's file at regular intervals not to exceed six (6) months.

**NOTE: When a foster care standard is waived, this information must be documented in the body of the resource parent assessment as either part of the initial assessment or updated assessment.** The documentation shall describe the reason(s) for issuing a waiver, what standard is being waived, and how child safety will be assured.

Relative foster families who receive a waiver, in accordance with the requirements above, will be considered to have satisfied the requirements for full, regular foster care licensure and is Title IV-E reimbursable.

**Variations.** Federal and state policy also allows a state, under specific circumstances, to meet a standard for licensure in a way other than is specified in rule while still assuring the child's safety and well-being. The term variance, as it applies to resource family licensure, is defined as a means of complying with the intent and purpose of a licensing rule in a manner other than that specifically prescribed. A variance constitutes an alternative equivalent method to meet the standard. For example, a variance may be granted when a family's well does not have potable water, and the family purchases bottled water for drinking. The variance from the original rule still meets the licensing requirement that the home is able to provide safe drinking water. Unlike a waiver, a variance may be considered for relatives, fictive kin, and non-relative resource families. To consider the variance of a foster care standard for a resource family, the following requirements must be satisfied:

- A variance may only be considered on an individual basis;
- The purpose of the licensing standard must be achieved, and the safety of the child maintained;
- Variances must be approved by the CFS Program Manager, Lead Chief, or their designee; and
- The continuing appropriateness of a variance must be reviewed, approved and documented in the family's file at regular intervals not to exceed six (6) months.

**NOTE: When a foster care standard is varied this information must be documented in the body of the resource parent assessment as either part of the initial assessment or updated assessment.** The documentation shall describe the reason(s) for issuing a variance, what standard is being varied and how child safety will be maintained.

Resource families who receive a variance, in accordance with the requirements above, will be considered to have satisfied the requirements for full, regular foster care licensure and are Title IV-E reimbursable.

**Any action taken not consistent with this standard must be pre-approved by the FACS Division Administrator or designee. The action, rationale and approval must be documented in the file.**

Sources: Answering the Call Practitioner's Guide, The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids and Treat Them Like Gold, A Best Practice Guide to Partnering with Resource Families.