Date – January 1, 2024

Manual - Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter D, Resource Family

Transmittal - # 307

The purpose of this transmittal is to provide new, revised, and clarified guidance for *Chapter D: Resource Family* of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Child and Family Services Manual. Unless otherwise stated, the provisions included in this transmittal are effective upon release.

Changes to the manual incorporate new state laws and state regulations, clarify existing guidance, and enhance guidance on meeting the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children in foster care through resource family recruitment, approval, and support. Until now, this chapter of guidance was a single section, but with these changes, the chapter has been reorganized and split into the following five sections: Resource Family Overview, Kinship Resource Family Approval, Resource Family Recruitment, Resource Family Approval, and Resource Family Support.

In this guidance transmittal, separate sections were developed for kinship family approvals and non-relative family approvals. This is not to indicate that there are separate standards of approval for the homes; instead, it is in response to requests from local departments to have all elements related to kinship approvals located in one place (Section 2). When guidance updates were made that apply to both kinship and non-relative approval standards, the changes for both are documented under Section 2 below and both subsections (kinship and non-relative) are listed in the left column.

In addition to the changes outlined in the chart below, minor edits were made throughout to address grammatical issues, remove outdated terminology, and update hyperlinks. All changes are in italics.

This transmittal and manual are available on FUSION at https://fusion.dss.virginia.gov/dfs/DFS-Home/Resource-Family/Resource-Family-Guidance and on the public site for VDSS at https://dss.virginia.gov/about/manuals.cgi

Changes to the manual are as follows:

Section(s) Changed	Significant Changes	Reason for Change
Section 1: Resource Family Overview		
1.1 Introduction (p.1)	A comparison table for approval of relative and non-relative resource parents demonstrates that both types of resource parents currently must meet the same approval requirements.	This table was added for clarification for our federal partners and at the request of local departments of social services (LDSS).

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1.3 Definitions (p.6)	Updated definitions to include the term "resource families" instead of "foster and adoptive families". Added "Certificate of Approval", "Fictive Kin", "Kin First Policy", "Normalcy", and "Recruitment portal."	This change was made to clarify terminology and add new terms based on feedback from LDSS.
1.4 Required Staff Training (p.10)	This subsection was added to outline the new and existing training requirements. This has not previously been addressed in guidance for pre-service training and Mutual Family Assessment (MFA) writing. Kinship courses are now required to support kinship practices along the child welfare continuum.	This change was made based on feedback from LDSS.
1.5 Kin First policy (p.10)	Language added to outline LDSS policy that ensures children are placed with relatives when they enter care and/or change placements.	This change was made based on input from federal partners.
1.5.1 Exception reports (p.10)	This subsection was added to explain the purpose of exception reports and LDSS requirements for filing whenever a child or youth is placed in a non-relative home.	This change was prompted to ensure LDSS meet the legal requirements of Senate Bill 39 (2024).
1.6 LDSS Resource Family Collaborations (p.11)	Language was added to clarify the process by which LDSS must form collaborations pursuant to new state law.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).
1.6.1 Recruiting (p.11)	Language was added stating that the use of the Faster Families Highway (FFH) complies with state law regarding collaboration amongst LDSS.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).
1.6.2 Training (p.11)	Language was added to ensure that CRAFFT trainings and collaboration with neighboring LDSS for training complies with new state law.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).
1.6.3 Approving (p.11)	Language was added to ensure that all updates to the FFH and OASIS resource records comply with new state law.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).

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1.6.3.1 Lending and Borrowing an LDSS-approved resource family (p.12)	Language was added to ensure that lending and borrowing LDSS resource families for child-specific placements complies with new state law.	This change was added to support existing practices based on input from LDSS and to comply with Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).
1.6.3.2 Transferring an LDSS-approved resource family (p.12)	Language was added to support practices and to comply with new state law.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2023 Acts of Assembly (HB 1744).
1.6.3.3 Transferring an approved resource family between LDSS and LCPA (p.12)	Language was added regarding the process for transferring MFA and approval documentation to comply with new state law.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 1744).
1.6.4 Supporting (p.12)	Language was added regarding how LDSS must support resource families as required by new state law.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).
1.7 CRAFFT (p.12)	Details were added that inform LDSS of this support and resource and how to access it.	This change was added to support existing practices based on input from LDSS.
1.8 MFA staff (p.13)	Details were added that inform LDSS of this support and resource and how to access it.	This change was added to support existing practices based on input from LDSS.
1.9 Conflict of Interest	Language was added to clarify that an employee of a LDSS cannot be the foster parent for a child in the custody of that LDSS	This change was added to support existing practices based on input from LDSS.
Section 2: Kinship Resource Family Approval **Approval standards are the same for kinship and non-relative resource families. Where updates are made in relation to the approval standards, those changes are documented here for both sections (Section 2: Kinship Resource Family Approval and Section 4: Resource Family Approval.*		
2.1 Discovery of Relatives (p.3)	This subsection was added to clarify that approval standards are the same for kinship and non-kinship resource homes.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS to have a specific section for kinship approvals.
2.2 Relative Notification of Kinship Approval Process (3)	This subsection was revised to include information on the Kinship Care brochure and to add details around ICPC notification requirements.	This change was made to enhance practice around relative notification.

2.3.1 Permanency Assessment Tool (p.3)	This subsection was revised to add information about the Permanency Assessment Tool and clarify that background checks should still be completed when relatives self-report a barrier crime.	This change was made to ensure consistent practice around running mandatory background checks.
2.3.3 When not to approve as kinship resource parents	This subsection was added to clarify that it is not necessary to approve a non-custodial parent as a kinship resource parent.	This change was added to support existing practices based on input from LDSS.
2.3.5 Notification of Denial & Appeal for Prospective Kinship Resource Parent	This subsection was revised to clarify the requirements for the LDSS when a denial of approval to be a kinship resource family has been appealed and overturned by the Office of Appeals and Fair Hearings	The change was made in response to questions raised by the Office of Appeals and Fair Hearings.
2.3.8.2 (p.7) and 4.1.3 (p.3) Marital Status	This subsection was revised to clarify that only married couples or an unmarried individual may adopt.	This change was made to eliminate inconsistencies in Resource Family and Adoption guidance.
2.4.1 Physical Home Environment (p.8)	This subsection was revised to reflect the expectation that LDSS should partner with kinship resource parents to problem-solve when they do not meet criteria on an initial physical home environment checklist.	This change was made to enhance practice related to the assessment and approval of relatives as kinship resource parents.
2.4.1.1. (p.9) and 4.5.1.1 (p.11) Physical Comfort	These subsections were added to clarify that rooms also need to be cool in hot weather.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.1.4 (p.10) and 4.5.1.4 Phone Access	These subsections were revised to elaborate on the expectations regarding phone access for children/youth in foster care.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.1.5.1 Emergency Preparedness Plan (p.10)	This subsection was revised to reflect when the emergency preparedness plan is due for kinship resource parents.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.1.5.4 (p.12) and 4.5.1.5.4 Pets (p.14)	These subsections were revised to add specific guidance around vaccine requirements.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.

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2.4.1.5.5 (p.12) and 4.5.1.5.5 Other (p.14)	These subsections were revised to provide details around expectations regarding water safety.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.2 Requirements Immediately Following Placement with a Kinship Resource Parent (p.13)	This subsection was added to provide details on how to actively support kinship resource parents in obtaining fingerprints within 72 hours of receiving a placement.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.2.1 (p.14) and 4.4 (p.9) Required Background Checks	These subsections were revised to add details around when to complete background checks and to clarify that determination letters CANNOT be shared with anyone other than the individual who is the subject of that particular background check.	This change was made based on input from the LDSS and the Office of Background Investigations.
2.4.2.1.1. (p.14) and 4.4.1 (p.8) Sworn Statement or Affirmation	These subsections were revised to reflect that the Sworn Statement is a background check BUT does not expire. They were also revised to note that the Sworn Statement indicates if out of state central registry checks are needed.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.2.1.2.1. (p.14) and 4.4.2.1 (p.10) "Unable to Determine" letters	These subsections were added to describe the process to follow if the LDSS receives an "Unable to Determine" result for resource parents based on the Barrier Crime Determination Guide.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS and to promote consistent practice around applying Virginia Code in regard to barrier crimes.
2.4.2.1.3. (p.15) and 4.4.3 (p.10) Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect	These subsections were revised to include a link to the Central Registry form and Other States Request for Search of CPS Central Registry contact list.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.4.2.1.4 (p.16) and 4.4.4 (p.10) Department of Motor Vehicles Check	These subsections were revised to note that the LDSS should utilize commercial accounts to access DMV records and should not expect resource parents to obtain their own DMV records.	This change was made to promote consistent Kin First practice amongst the LDSS.
2.4.2.2. Supporting New Placements (p.16)	This subsection was added to provide detail around kinship specific support during the	This change was made to promote consistent Kin First practice amongst the LDSS.

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	approval process to increase the likelihood of successful placement.	
2.4.2.1.3. Central Registry of abuse and neglect (p.15) and 4.4.3. (p.10)	These subsections were revised to add the new online portal for Central Registry Searches and to state that out of country searches are not necessary.	This change was made based on updates from OBI and input from the LDSS.
2.4.2.3 Kinship Waiver (p.17)	This subsection was revised to clarify the process of submitting a Kinship waiver and to provide an example for the timeline for the waiver process.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.1 Additional Documents to be completed at placement (p.19)	This subsection was added to provide a timeline for when initial documents should be signed when children are placed using kinship waivers.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.1.1.4 Foster Care Agreement/Adoptive Placement Agreement (p.22) and 4.5.2.4.10.4. (p.23)	These subsections were revised to clarify that the adoptive placement agreement is not signed during the approval process and is for adoptive placements only.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.1.1.5 Financial Agreement (p.22)	This subsection was revised to state when to sign the Financial Agreement and discuss the VEMAT with kinship resource parents.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.2.1 Certificate of Approvals for a Kinship Resource Parent (p.23)	This subsection was revised to add details around child-specific Certificate of Approval (COA) for kinship resource parents.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.2.2. (p.24) and 4.5.3.2.2. (p.24) Checklist for Initial Provider Approval	These subsections were revised to add details about uploading approval documents to COMPASS.	This change was made based on feedback from Quality Assurance & Accountability (QAA) and the LDSS.
2.5.3 Pre-Service Training for Kinship Resource Parent and 2.5.4 Mutual Family Assessment for	These subsections were added to specify how to make training and the MFA kinship specific.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.

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Kinship Resource Parent (p.25)		
2.5.4.1.2 Assessing the prospective resource parent's knowledge, abilities, attitudes, relationships, and capacity to foster (p.27)	This subsection was revised to add details around parenting style and the role of a kinship resource parent. This subsection was also revised to reflect that The Permanency Assessment Tool responses may be used to gather this information and inform the MFA.	This change was added based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.4.1.3.1. (p.29) and 4.5.2.3.1. (p.17) On-going Resource Parent Training expectation	These subsections were revised to explain the role that in-service training has in further developing resource parents.	This change was added based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.4.1.3.2. and (p.30) 4.5.2.3.2. (p.17) Changes in the household	These subsections were revised to add detail around maintaining compliance during the approval process in the usage of the Change of Circumstance addendum.	This change was added based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.4.1.4.6. (p.31) and 4.5.2.4.8. (p.19) Federal W-9	These subsections were added to support efficient LDSS practice so that resource parents may be paid monthly stipends in a timely manner.	This change was added based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.5.2 (p.32) and 4.5.4.2 (p.26) Child Welfare Information record	These subsections were revised to state that the LDSS is responsible for entering homes (LDSS Home, Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) Homes, ICPC Homes, etc.) into Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) and VDSS is responsible for entering all other Resources Categories/Types.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.5.1. Establishing a Kinship Resource Parent file (p.33)	This subsection was revised to state that a parent file should be established once the Permanency Assessment Tool is completed	This change was made to establish consistent practice for kinship resource parent files.

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	and the decision to approve is made.	
2.5.5.3 (p.34) and 4.5.4.3 (p.26) Maintenance of the File	These subsections were revised to state that the paper file may be disposed of five years after the resource family is closed.	This change was made to reflect changes to regulations on locality general schedules. GS-15
2.5.6. Maintaining Kinship Approval (p.33)	This subsection was added to outline kinship specific efforts for maintaining approval of kinship resource families.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.6.2. (p.34) and 4.5.5.2. (p.27) Monitoring Efforts	These subsections were revised to add detail around when to use the Change in Circumstance addendum. Additional information was added to address specifics regarding quarterly visits with kinship resource parents.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.7 (p.35) and 4.5.6 (p.29) Addendums	These subsections were revised to clarify that addendums should be updated in CWIS.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.7.2 (p.36) and 4.6. (p.30) Re-approval	These subsections were revised to provide details around when to complete background checks for re-approval.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.7.2.1 (p.37) and 4.6.1. (p.30) Checklist for Re-Approval	These subsections were revised to clarify that the Checklist for Family Re-approval, COA, and Physical Home Environment Checklist (PHEC) should be uploaded to COMPASS.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS and to improve consistent practice.
2.5.7.3 (p.37) and 4.6.2. (p.30) Interview Requirements	These subsections were revised to add details around what to assess during interviews for the renewal of the COA.	This change was made based on feedback from LDSS.
2.5.7.4.1 (p.38) and 4.6.2.2.1 (p31) Background checks	These statements were added to clarify actions to maintain approval when criminal checks expire prior to re-approval	This change was made based on input from federal partners.
2.5.7.4.2 (p.38) and 4.5.6.4.2 (p.31) Transportation	These subsections were revised to clarify that DMV checks should be completed again at re-approval.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.

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2.5.7.4.4. (p.39) and 4.6.2.2.4. (p.31) Physical Home Environment Checklist	These subsections were revised to clarify that a walk-through of the home and the physical home environment checklist should be completed again at re-approval.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.7.5 (p.40) and 4.6.2.3. (p.32) Subsequent Certificate of Approvals	These subsections were revised to clarify when the COA needs to be updated.	This change was made based on feedback from the LDSS.
2.5.7.5.1 (p. 39) and 4.6.2.3.1 Lapses in Certificate of Approvals and/or Background Checks	This subsection was added to explain that fingerprints and not Virginia State Police name checks must be completed and a new COA issued when background checks expire or a COA lapses.	This change was made to bring guidance in compliance with federal instruction.
2.6 Suspending or Revoking Kinship Resource Parent (p.40)	This subsection was revised to reference Virginia Code §63.2-900.1, which states that children cannot be removed from kinship homes after six consecutive months unless specific criteria are met.	This is updated to reflect state law governing placement changes in kinship homes.
2.7 Support of a Kinship Resource Parent (p.42)	This subsection was added to provide more detail around how to support kinship resource parents.	This information was incorporated as part of the recommendation from Virginia's Kin First Assessment.
Section 3: Resource Family Recruitment		
3.1 Kinship Resource Family Recruitment (p. 2)	This subsection was updated to address kinship recruitment, converting a kinship approval to a non-relative approval and links to other policy chapters with greater detail.	These changes were made based on input from LDSS and to offer clarity and improve practice.
3.2 Recruitment Overview (p.2)	This subsection was amended to introduce the role of FFH in LDSS recruitment.	This change was made to offer direction with incorporating FFH into practice.
3.3.1 Strategies for Recruiting (p.3)	This subsection was amended to include a recommendation to develop existing resource parents to expand fostering profiles.	This change was made to incorporate FFH and collaboration efficiencies.

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3.3.3 Faster Families Highway (p.4)	This subsection was amended to review the FFH online recruitment portal information for managing processes.	This change was made to introduce and guide LDSS in the use and features of FFH.
3.3.3.1 Designate a Point of Contact (p.5)	This subsection was amended to state that LDSS recruitment needs a point of contact for FFH.	This change was made to inform LDSS about the role of the point of contact in the FFH.
3.4 Communication plan for inquiries (p.5)	This subsection was amended to incorporate FFH into inquiry management.	This change was made to guide LDSS in integrating the FFH when developing an inquiry communication plan.
Section 4: Resource Family Approval		
4.0 Resource Family Approval (p.3)	This subsection was added to remind LDSS that kinship related content is now in section 2.	This change was made to better organize the content in this chapter of guidance.
4.2.2 Core Competencies (p.5)	This subsection was amended to update language to be strength-based.	This change was made based on input from the Office of Trauma & Resilience at VDSS.
4.5.2.4.2. References (p.18)	This subsection was amended to add a suggestion to send similar questionnaires to adult children who do not live in the home regarding their experience of being parented.	This change was made to improve assessment practice.
4.5.3.1 The decision to approve or deny (p.23)	This subsection was amended to clarify that the LDSS should consider the prospective resource parent's ability to be developed.	This change was made based on input from LDSS.
4.5.4.2. Child Welfare Information System record (p.26)	This subsection was revised to add direction on the responsibility of entering resource families into OASIS.	This change was made based on input from LDSS and the IT Portfolio at VDSS.
4.8.1. Respite Approval Process (p.34)	This subsection was amended to add a reminder to LDSS to utilize CRAFFT and the Foster Parent College for in-service training.	This change was made to increase awareness of resources available to LDSS.
Section 5: Resource Family Support		
5.2 Valuing Resource Families (p.2)	This subsection was amended to add collaborative programs as a source for support and in-service training to resource parents.	This change was prompted by Chapter 336 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly (HB 653).
5.4.1 Lifebooks (p.4)	This subsection was added to connect to foster care guidance (Sections 4.14 and 9.5.3).	This change was to support improved and consistent practice across program areas.

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5.5.1 Purpose of Respite (p.5)	This subsection was added to clarify the use of respite care and to consider normalcy.	This change was made based on input from LDSS.
5.7 Post-placement review (p.5)	This subsection was added for the on-going assessment, development, and support of resource families.	This change was made to create improved and consistent support for resource parents.
5.8 VEMAT (p.6)	This subsection was added to support resource parents by explaining the purpose of the VEMAT process and connect to foster care guidance (Section 18.2).	This change was made to support consistent practice across program areas.
5.9 In-service training (p.6)	This subsection was added to explain the value of in-service training for development, placement stability and retention.	This change was made to support improved and consistent practice in developing and retaining resource parents.
5.9.1. Training needs (p.6)	This subsection was added to explain how the LDSS can utilize the Foster Parent College as a support with in-service training.	This change was made to increase awareness of this resource for support.

Questions about this transmittal should be directed to the Regional Resource Family Consultants:

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