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RESOURCE FAMILY OVERVIEW

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RESOURCE FAMILY OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This guidance addresses the approval of all types of families who provide care for children in the foster care system. While terms such as “kinship foster parent”, “foster parent,” “adoptive parent,” or “respite parent” indicate who a family is relative to a child’s permanency plan, these are not discrete or mutually exclusive activities; rather they are a few of the many ways a family can serve as a resource to that child. In this guidance, all types of families foster, adoptive, and respite caregivers, as well as approved relatives, concurrent planning families, etc. are generally referred to as resource families. For simplicity in this document, all individuals seeking approval are referred to as “prospective resource families.”

This chapter of guidance is in accordance with Virginia Administrative Code 22 VAC 40-211 and is divided into five sections that address resource families, including kinship resource family approval, and non-relative resource family recruitment, approval and support. This guidance also provides the local board of social services (LDSS) with specific required and recommended procedures and forms needed to carry out these regulatory standards. Requirements apply to adoptive families only until the final order of adoption is issued.

The approval processes as presented in this guidance are consistent with two significant approaches to working with resource families. Families are dually-approved as foster and adoptive families and the approval process is a mutual endeavor between the LDSS and the family requesting approval. These processes are consistent with Virginia’s practice model. Both relative and non-relative resource parents must meet the same approval requirements, as outlined in the table below.

Comparison of Virginia’s process for approving relative and non-relative resource families

Steps for approval	Relatives	Non-relatives
Recruit family	Yes- Family Partnership Meeting (FPM)	Yes- Faster Families Highway
Informational session	Yes- individual Permanency Assessment Tool	Yes- in most cases, group orientation

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Physical Home Environment Checklist	Yes- home visit	Yes- completed as part of MFA process
Criminal State Name check on adults	Yes-rule out if any barrier crimes (subject to relative exceptions listed in Virginia Code)	No (This check is not necessary because they must have the FBI criminal check completed prior to approval)
OASIS search on adults	Yes- rule out if any CPS findings	No (This check is not necessary because they must have the central registry check completed prior to approval)
Kinship Foster Parent Waiver	Yes- allows for immediate placement when the above steps are successful	No- must be fully approved before placement
FBI criminal and sex offender registry checks (fingerprints) for all adults	Yes- submitted within 72 hours of placement (subject to relative exceptions listed in Virginia Code)	Yes- submitted and returned with an eligible determination
Central Registry check for all adults (for CPS)	Yes- and for any states lived in within last 5 years	Yes- and for any states lived in within last 5 years- submitted and returned with an eligible determination
DMV check	Yes	Yes
Sworn Statement	Yes	Yes
Three interviews- minimum	Yes	Yes
Mutual Family Assessment (MFA)	Yes- waived for 6 months	Yes
Physicals for care providers	Yes- waived for 6 months	Yes
TB screens for all household members	Yes- waived for 6 months	Yes

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Pre-service training	Yes- NTDC- waived for 6 months	Yes- NTDC
Certificate of Approval (COA)- 36 months	Yes- issued when fingerprints and CPS checks are returned with an eligible determination	Yes- when all approval requirements are complete

1.2 Legal basis

1.2.1. Federal law and regulation

Specific foster care and adoption home approval requirements are set forth in the following federal laws, many of which are incorporated into Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

- P.L. 109-432 – Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006
- P.L. 110-351 – Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Incentives Act of 2008
- P.L. 109-288 – Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006
- P.L. 109-248 – Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006
- P.L. 109-239 – Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006
- P.L. 109-171 – Deficit Reduction Act of 2005
- P.L. 109-113 – Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005
- Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001
- Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Courts Act of 2000
- Inter-Country Adoption Act of 2000
- Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act, 2000
- Foster Care Independence Act of 1999
- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997

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- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as Amended, 1996
- Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEPA) of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996
- Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994
- P.L. 96-272 – The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980
- Additional requirements are set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 45 - Public Welfare Chapter XIII - Office of Human Development Services
  - 45 CFR 1355 – General
  - 45 CFR 1356 – Requirements Applicable to Title IV-E
  - 45 CFR 1357 – Requirements Applicable to Title IV-B

1.2.2. State law and regulation

Specific state laws relevant to the approval of resource families are:

The Code of Virginia

- § 63.2-900 – Accepting children for placement in homes, facilities, etc., by local boards.
- § 63.2-901.1, Criminal history and central registry check for placements of children.
- § 63.2-1208 – Investigations; report to circuit court.
- § 63.2-1225 – Determination of appropriate home.
- § 63.2-1231 – Home study; meeting required; exception.
- § 63.2-1719 – Barrier crime, construction.
- § 63.2-1721 – Background check upon application for licensure or registration as child-welfare agency; background check of foster or adoptive parents approve by child-placing agencies and family day homes approved by family day systems; penalty.

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- § 63.2-1722 – Revocation or denial of renewal based on background checks; failure to obtain background check.
- § 63.2-1723 – Child welfare agencies; criminal conviction and waiver.

The Administrative Code of Virginia, 22 VAC 40-211, Resource, Foster, and Adoptive Family Home Approval Standards.

1.3. Definitions

The following words and terms are defined in state regulation as identified below. When used in this chapter, they shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Term	Definition
Adoptive Parent	Any resource parent selected and approved by a parent or a child placing agency for the placement of a child with the intent of adoption.
Adult	Any person 18 years of age or over.
Applicant	An individual or couple applying to be approved as a resource parent. Also referred to as a prospective resource parent.
Background Check	A criminal history record check, child abuse and neglect central registry check, and any other requirement as set forth in § 63.2-901.1 of the Code of Virginia.
Caregiver	Any individual having the responsibility of providing care for a child and includes the following: (i) parent or other person legally responsible for the child's care; (ii) any other person who has assumed caregiving responsibility by virtue of an agreement with the legally responsible person; (iii) person responsible by virtue of their position of conferred authority; or (iv) adult person residing in the home with the child.
Central Registry	A subset of the child abuse and neglect information system and the name index with identifying information on an individual named as an abuser and/or neglector in founded child abuse and/or neglect complaints or reports not currently under administrative appeal; maintained by the VDSS.
Certificate of Approval	A certificate issued to the approved resource family confirming that requirements for approval have been met. As long as the parents and the home maintain approval compliance, the approval remains in effect for 36 months.

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Child	Any natural person less than 18 years of age.
Child-Placing Agency	Any person who places children with resource parents, adoptive parents, or in independent living arrangements pursuant to § 63.2-1819 of the Code of Virginia or a local board that places children with resource parents or adoptive parents pursuant to § 63.2900, 63.2-903 or 63.2-1221 of the Code of Virginia. Officers, employees, or agents of Virginia, or any locality acting within the scope of their authority as such, who serve as or maintain a child placing agency, shall not be required to be licensed.
Commissioner	The commissioner of the VDSS, their designee, or authorized representative.
Contingency Fund	A statewide insurance plan to supplement local board approved resource families' homeowner's policies to reimburse for certain damages or losses incurred due to actions of the child during placement with the family.
Corporal Punishment	Punishment administered through the intentional infliction of pain or discomfort to the body through actions such as, but not limited to, (i) striking, or hitting with any part of the body or with an implement; (ii) pinching, pulling, or shaking; or (iii) any similar action that normally inflicts pain or discomfort.
CRAFFT	An acronym for Consortium for Resource, Adoptive, and Foster Family Training. This contracted training service is available for prospective resource families to increase the pool of viable family-based placements. CRAFFT also delivers in-service training for currently approved families and conducts assessments specific to training needs of prospective resource families.
Department (VDSS)	The State Department of Social Services.
Dual Approval Process	A process that includes a study of the family, home, mutual selection, interviews, training, and background checks to be completed on all prospective resource parents to be considered for approval as a foster or adoptive parent.
Fictive Kin	*Persons who are not related to a child by blood or adoption but have an established relationship with the child or his family and such relationship existed prior to the child's initial entry into foster care*.

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	These relationships will maintain the child's cultural values, family connections and support networks. When identifying fictive kin, consider whether the child/family considers them family. Fictive kin does not include relationships manufactured by and for the child welfare system (these persons may be developed as resource parents as a possible placement option after approval).
Foster Parent	An approved caregiver who gives 24-hour family care, room and board, and services for children or youth committed or entrusted to a child-placing agency. Primarily referred to as a resource parent.
In-Service Training	The ongoing instruction received by resource parents after they complete their pre-service training.
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)	A uniform law that has been enacted by all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that establishes orderly procedures for the interstate placement of children and sets responsibility for those involved in placing those children.
Kin First Policy	An LDSS policy which outlines a process with LDSS leadership and supervisory oversight that ensures that children are placed with relatives when they come into care or when they change placements.
Kinship Resource Parent	A relative or fictive kin who is approved by LDSS to provide 24-hour substitute family care to specific children with whom they have a relationship, room and board, and services for children and youth committed or entrusted to a child placing agency.
Kinship Pre-approval	The process of completing a Virginia State Police name search, a search of the CPS Central Registry through Child Welfare Information System to allow for immediate placement of a child with a kinship resource parent prior to initiating the approval process.
Local Department (LDSS)	The local department of social services of any county or city in Virginia.
Mutual Family Assessment Report	Contains narrative, checklist and other data as required for resource family approval. Historically, this has been called the "home study."

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Normalcy	Allowing children and youth in foster care to experience childhood and adolescence in ways similar to their peers who are not in foster care by empowering resource parents to use the reasonable and prudent parent standard as referenced in Public Law 113-183 when making decisions regarding extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities.
Parent	The birth or adoptive parent of a child.
Pre-Service Training	The instruction received by prospective resource parents during the initial approval process.
Provider	A kinship, resource, foster, adoptive, or respite family.
Recruitment portal	The Faster Families Highway online tool used for recruitment of non-relative resource parents to increase efficiency and support local recruitment efforts.
Resource Family Consultant	The title of regional staff who work with the LDSS regarding the recruitment, development, and support of kinship and resource families. This work includes conducting assessments with agencies to determine their strengths, needs, and capacities regarding resource families.
Resource Parent	A caregiver who is dually-approved to foster and adopt and provides 24-hour substitute, out-of-home family care, room and board, services for children or youth in foster care and is committed to support reunification. Resource families include individuals, couples, and families. A kinship resource parent is either related to the child or is fictive kin with a pre-existing relationship to the child who has been approved as a resource parent.
Respite Care	The provision of temporary care for children in foster care on an emergency or planned basis for the purposes of providing placement stability, supporting the achievement of timely permanency, and promoting connections to relatives. Respite care services must not exceed 14 consecutive days.

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Respite Parent	A resource parent approved to provide temporary care to children on an emergency or planned basis.
Revocation	The permanent cancellation or withdrawal of approval of a resource family.
Sworn Statement or Affirmation	The document each adult household member in a prospective resource family home completes to disclose whether the individual has a criminal conviction or is the subject of any pending criminal charges within or outside Virginia and whether the individual has been the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect within or outside Virginia. This document does not expire once completed.
Suspension	The temporary deferment or cancellation of an approved resource family that allows for reinstatement of the approval when circumstances causing the suspension are resolved.
Waiver	The allowance of non-compliance with a specific requirement for approval as a resource family. There are two types of waivers: a Kinship Waiver, which is the same as a temporary waiver, and a Non-Safety Waiver, which is the same as a permanent waiver and requires an annual review.

1.4. Required training

The training required for Resource Family Program Family Service Specialists (FSS) and supervisors during the first six months of employment includes:

- CWS4080W: Kinship Care in Virginia (pre-requisite: CWSE4060)
- CWS3103W: Mutual Family Assessment
- CWS3101W: Introduction to PRIDE Model

1.5. Kin First Policy

Local departments of social services (LDSS) must prioritize family engagement and placing children who enter foster care with relatives. As a result, LDSS are expected to develop a written Kin First policy that outlines the process that they will undertake to ensure that family search and engagement is prioritized. The policy must include LDSS leadership and supervisory oversight to ensure consistency in family engagement efforts, which ensures that children are placed with relatives when they come into care or when they change placements. A Kin First policy ensures due diligence when identifying and assessing

prospective kinship resource families and outlines FSS expectations and responsibilities as well as supervisory support and approval. More on Relative Search and Engagement is available in Chapter A. Section 2 Family Engagement Section 2.2 and 2.3 and Foster Care Guidance Section 6.6.

1.5.1. Exception reports

Effective January 1, 2025, anytime children and youth enter foster care and are not placed with a kinship resource parent or anytime children and youth in foster care experience a placement change that does not result in placement with a kinship resource parent or a trial home visit with a parent or prior custodian , the LDSS must submit an exception report to VDSS within 72 hours of the placement. Exception reports outline all efforts to engage relatives and fictive kin, identify the barriers that prevent placement with a kinship resource parent and are signed by the LDSS director or designee prior to submission.

Children and youth who enter foster care and are first placed in kinship placements experience fewer placement changes, spend less time in foster care, and are less likely to age out of foster care. The standard practice when placing children and youth who enter foster care should be first placement with kin. For those children and youth who enter care and are not first placed with family, exception reports ensure that concerted efforts are being made to identify and overcome barriers to kinship placements. Ongoing, diligent efforts to assess and engage family members are an essential part of casework.

Exception reports will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that VDSS and the LDSS are identifying and addressing any existing barriers to placement with kinship resource families when children cannot remain in or be returned to their parent(s)' home.

1.6. LDSS Resource Family Collaborations

LDSS are encouraged to develop collaborative partnerships to support family engagement, the approval and support of kinship resource parents, and ongoing recruitment, training, assessment, and development of non-relative resource parents. Such programs will:

- Promote Kin First practices within localities by prioritizing search, engagement, and approval of kinship resource parents.
- Ensure staff members are specifically devoted to engaging kinship resource parents in the process of approval and sustain recruitment, training, and approval of non-relative resource parents.
- Promote a shared understanding and awareness of available resource families approved by LDSS who are prepared to build relationships with the families of children and preserve the connections children have to their communities and natural support networks.

- Increase opportunities for collaborative data-driven recruitment efforts; and
- Create opportunities for specialized training and development of resource parents to better meet the needs of children in care.

As of July 1, 2023, LDSS are required to collaborate with neighboring LDSS to increase the availability of a local foster home placement for children in foster care (§ 63.2-900.) LDSS will meet this requirement by engaging in:

1.6.1. Collaborative Recruitment

LDSS must use the Faster Families Highway and have all non-relative recruited families enter through the recruitment portal so that all prospective resource families are visible to other LDSS (this does not apply to kinship resource families). LDSS are encouraged to collaborate on recruitment efforts (for information sessions, ads, events, etc.) to increase the pool of locally approved resource families in the region.

1.6.2. Collaborative Training

LDSS must share pre-service training schedules for kinship resource parents and non-relative resource parents with Regional Resource Family Consultants for a statewide calendar, which includes CRAFFT trainings, in order to enhance timely training availability. LDSS must create a process for sharing training slots in training sessions with neighboring LDSS.

1.6.3. Collaborative Approval and/or Sharing

LDSS must indicate the approval of new resource families in the recruitment portal after the approval process is completed and maintain accurate resource records in the child welfare information system.

1.6.3.1. Lending and Borrowing an LDSS-approved resource family

Lending and borrowing LDSS-approved resource families enables LDSS to keep children in foster care in their communities, placed with siblings who are in the custody of neighboring LDSS or with resource families who can best meet their needs. Lending and borrowing resource homes is generally expected to be for child-specific placements. This collaboration is between LDSS.

1.6.3.2. Transferring an LDSS-approved resource family

Transferring a resource family's approval from one LDSS to another involves the resource parent's written request for the transfer of approval documents, including the original mutual family assessment from the originating LDSS. The background checks and/or the determination letters are not transferred to the

receiving LDSS who must run new background checks. The receiving LDSS is then fully responsible for the maintenance of the resource family's approval and support after the point of transfer.

1.6.3.3 Transferring an approved resource family between LDSS and LCPA

Transferring a resource parent's approval between an LDSS and a licensed child placing agency (LCPA) is initiated by the resource parent's written request for the transfer of approval documents. The approval documents from the sending agency include the original mutual family assessment, addendums and any approval documents related to the most recent re-approval except background checks. The background checks and/or the determination letters are not transferred to the receiving agency who must run new background checks. The receiving LDSS would update the approval documentation to ensure that the transferring resource parent is able to meet the needs of local children in foster care and to allow the receiving LDSS to support the resource family.

1.6.4. Collaborative Support

LDSS must collaborate with neighboring LDSS to offer support to resource families so they may better meet the needs of children and youth in foster care and aid in retaining approved resource families. Working with other LDSS can involve shared support groups, in-service training, and forms or processes that make supporting resource families more effective and efficient. Collaborative support also involves engaging private providers to support kinship resource parents.

1.7 Consortium for Resource, Adoptive, and Foster Family Training (CRAFFT)

Regional CRAFFT Coordinators support LDSS efforts to recruit, train, approve and support kinship and non-relative resource parents. CRAFFT Coordinators may be engaged by LDSS to facilitate pre-service training for prospective kinship and non-relative resource parents as well as in-service trainings to approved kinship and non-relative resource parents. LDSS may access this support from CRAFFT Coordinators by contacting the Regional Resource Family Consultants.

1.8. Mutual Family Assessment Staff

Mutual Family Assessment (MFA) staff support LDSS efforts to facilitate the approval of kinship and non-relative resource parents. LDSS may access this support from MFA staff by contacting the Regional Resource Family Consultants.

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1.9 Conflict of interest

Individuals who work for an LDSS and their relatives must not be approved to be either a kinship or non-relative resource parent by the LDSS for whom they are employed. The employee and relatives of the employee may be a kinship or non-relative resource parent for another LDSS or a child-placing agency, but cannot serve as a foster parent for a child in the custody of the agency for whom they work. In order to allow an employee or relative of the employee to be a kinship or non-relative resource parent for a child in the custody of the LDSS or child-placing agency for whom that individual works, the child's custody may be transferred to another LDSS. (See Foster Care Guidance Section 6.17.2) LDSS employees can also play other significant roles in the life of a child or youth – as advocates, mentors, etc.

- Resource parents who have met the requirements to be an approved childcare provider may provide childcare in their home for their child in foster care. However, Title IV-E federal funds may not be used to pay for the childcare service. The childcare provider may apply for childcare through Title IV-A childcare funds.

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