

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 12: Foster Family Home Licensing	Effective Date: December 1, 2017
	Section 32: Physical Environment	Version: 2

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will ensure that all foster family homes meet the minimum requirements for the physical environment as required by Indiana law.

Foster parents are required to report to DCS or the supervising licensed child placing agency (LCPA) any change within the foster family home impacting the health, safety, or general well-being of the child including, but not limited to, the following:

1. The physical location or mailing address of the foster family home, the telephone number of the foster parents, or both;
2. The physical condition of the foster family home or the use of bedrooms in the foster family home as it relates to the child, or both; and
3. Any new household members.

Note: The foster family shall fully disclose all business conducted on the premises of the foster family home. Commercial activities that adversely affect the welfare of children are prohibited.

The foster family home must be in compliance with Indiana Administrative Code regarding the physical facilities of foster family homes (see [465 IAC 2-1.5-8](#) through [465 IAC 2-1.5-12](#)).

The foster family home must contain a clean interior, which is free from dangerous or hazardous conditions (such as exposed wiring or chipping paint).

The exterior premises of the foster family home must be clean and free from dangerous or hazardous conditions.

The foster family must have access to a working telephone.

The living area must be safe, comfortable, and accessible.

Areas not commonly used for sleeping shall not be used for a bedroom (see Related Information). These areas include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Living area;
2. Dining area;
3. Hall; and
4. Basement.

All foster family homes must provide:

1. A bed for each foster child (see Related Information for additional information);

Note: The foster family shall have sufficient bedroom space to allow at least 50 usable

square feet for each child. Every bedroom must have two (2) exits.

2. Adequate space for storage space for personal belongings;
3. Eating, recreation, bathroom, and bathing facilities; and

Note: The foster family home must have a functioning bathroom.

4. Adequate healthcare and food.

The foster family home shall have working utilities at all times except for temporary interruptions as may be necessary for repairs or natural disasters.

All household chemicals must be out of the reach of children. These chemicals include but are not limited, to the following:

1. Poisons;
2. Cleaners;
3. Detergents; and
4. Medications.

Foster parents who own or maintain firearms in the foster home will be expected to complete the [Foster Parent Safety Agreement Regarding Firearms and Other Weapons \(SF 56320\)](#).

Foster parents must be in compliance with state and local laws with regard to firearms. Firearms, including BB guns and air guns, shall be unloaded, locked, and secured to prevent unauthorized use. Ammunition and projectiles, such as arrows, or other items which can be used to make a weapon operable, shall be locked separately from the weapon.

Foster children shall not be given access to firearms or other weapons unless the Regional Manager (RM) or designee gives written approval and a court order has been obtained. When possible, DCS will also seek the consent of the parent, guardian, or custodian (unless Termination of Parental Rights [TPR] has occurred).

Foster parents shall maintain current documentation verifying that household pets have had vaccinations required by law.

Note: A household pet with a known history of being vicious or infected with any disease transmittable to humans may not be kept by the foster parents.

The foster family home shall have one (1) smoke detector that is within 10 feet of each bedroom door. At least one (1) smoke detector in operating condition shall be on each level of the home. The home must have at least one (1) two and one-half (2 ½) pounds or greater A-B-C type fire extinguisher in operating condition on each floor of the home.

A carbon monoxide detector shall be required in the foster family home unless only electricity is used for cooking and heating the home.

The furnace, stove, heater, and other equipment requiring ventilation must be properly ventilated and operational.

Cooking and refrigeration equipment of the foster family home must be clean and sanitary both inside and outside.

The foster family must have access to reliable transportation.

Note: The foster parent must provide a valid copy of his/her driver's license, registration, and automotive insurance, if applicable. Additionally, appropriate car seats must be used, if applicable.

The foster home shall be connected to a public or private water supply. A private water supply shall be tested annually for safety, and the cost of testing will be covered by the foster family.

Note: Well water analysis must be completed, if applicable; or bottled water must be used for cooking and drinking.

The foster parents or another responsible person must be physically present at the swimming pool, hot tub, or body of water, to supervise children at all times. All in-ground or above-ground swimming pools or hot tubs accessible to children must be:

1. In compliance with all state and local laws and zoning ordinances;
2. Maintained in a clean and safe condition; and
3. Secured in an appropriate manner to prevent children from entering the area unsupervised.

If the foster family home is a mobile home, the following conditions must be met:

1. There shall be two (2) exits, located at least 20 feet apart. One (1) exit must be within 35 feet of each bedroom door; and
2. The mobile home shall be skirted and securely anchored.

Code References

1. [465 IAC 2-1.5 Licensing of Foster Family Homes for Children](#)
2. [465 IAC 2-1.5-8: Physical facilities of the foster family home; general](#)
3. [465 IAC 2-1.5-9: Physical facilities of the foster family home; bedrooms and bathrooms](#)
4. [465 IAC 2-1.5-10: Physical facilities of the foster family home; safety; general](#)
5. [465 IAC 2-1.5-11: Physical facilities of the foster family home; safety; fire and safety hazards](#)
6. [465 IAC 2-1.5-12: Physical facilities of the foster family home; safety; cleanliness and sanitation](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM), Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS), and/or the LCPA worker will:

1. Conduct a visit to the home of the foster family;
2. Complete the [Resource Family Home Physical Environment Checklist \(SF53186\)](#);
3. Complete the [Residential Pool Requirements/Body of Water Safety Plan \(SF54609\)](#) and/or the [Foster Parent Safety Agreement Regarding Firearms and Other Weapons \(SF 56320\)](#), if applicable;
4. Obtain copies of required documents; and
5. Discuss safe sleep expectations, including crib compliance. See Safe Sleep Practice Guidance #2.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Physical Environment Requirements

Discuss the physical environment requirements with the family, such as having access to a working telephone and transportation.

Smoking in Resource Homes

It is important to ensure that children under DCS care and supervision are not exposed to second-hand smoke. Smoking should not occur in the immediate living area of the foster parent's home or in the presence of children under DCS care and supervision. Smoking is prohibited in the child's sleeping area(s). Foster parents must refrain from smoking in vehicles while transporting children in DCS care and supervision.

Foster parents must not purchase tobacco products for any child under DCS care and supervision, as it is illegal for children under 18 to have cigarettes. If a foster parent discovers a child under the age of 18 who is under DCS care and supervision is in possession of tobacco products, they should take control of the tobacco product and contact the child's FCM.

Safe Sleep

FCMs will talk to parents, guardians, and caregivers about safe sleep for infants and will document the discussion in the case management system. Refer to the below information for safe sleep guidelines:

1. Always place babies alone, on their backs, and in a crib (the ABCs) to sleep. The back sleep position is the safest¹. Keep other caregivers informed of these safe sleep guidelines.
2. In 2010, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the further manufacture of drop-side cribs (i.e., cribs that allow for the sides to be lowered and raised). These types of cribs are not permitted for children under DCS care and supervision. See the following link for a picture of the new crib: <http://onsafety.cpsc.gov/blog/2011/06/14/the-new-crib-standard-questions-and-answers/>;
3. Place babies on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet. Never place babies to sleep on couches, car seats, swings, pillows, bean bags, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces;
4. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding, out of the baby's sleep area. Do not use pillows, blankets, quilts, or pillow-like crib bumpers in the sleep area. A sleep sack is appropriate to keep the baby warm;
5. Keep baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where caregivers and others sleep. Babies should not sleep on any surface with adults or other children. They may sleep in the same room as the caregiver;
6. Consider using a clean, dry pacifier when placing the infant down to sleep, but do not force the baby to take it;
7. Dress babies in light sleep clothing and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult;
8. Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on a baby's head by providing "tummy time" when the baby is awake and someone is watching. Also, change the direction that the baby lies in the crib and avoid excessive time in car seats, carriers, bouncers, and swings. These items should be placed/used on appropriate surfaces and should not be utilized in place of a crib; and

¹ Riley Children's Health: <https://www.rileychildrens.org/health-info/sleep-safety>

9. There should be no smoking around the baby as babies who are around cigarette smoke have a higher risk of sleep-related deaths.²

Additional information regarding safe sleep is available on the following websites:

1. [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#);
2. [Healthy Children.org](#);
3. [The National Institute of Health](#);
4. [Riley Children's Health](#); and
5. [The DCS Website](#).

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Resource Family Home Physical Environment Checklist \(SF 53186\)](#)
2. [Residential Pool Requirements/Body of Water Safety Plan \(SF 54609\)](#)
3. [Foster Parent Safety Agreement Regarding Firearms and Other Weapons \(SF 56320\)](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

A-B-C Extinguisher

The A-B-C extinguisher is a multi-purpose fire extinguisher that can be used on two or more types of fires. Class A extinguishers put out fires in ordinary combustible materials such as cloth, wood, rubber, paper, and many plastics. Class B extinguishers are used on fires involving flammable liquids, such as grease, gasoline, oil, and oil-based paints. Class C extinguishers are suitable for use on fires involving appliances, tools, or other equipment that is electrically energized or plugged in. For more information, please visit the [U.S. Fire Administration](#).

Foster Care Liability Insurance

Foster Care Liability Insurance is protection and coverage provided to foster parents upon request; the insurance covers certain risks associated with caring for children under DCS care and supervision. DCS will seek to auto-enroll foster parents into the policy coverage when an initial placement occurs into a foster home. When this occurs, foster parents should receive a letter from DCS confirming their enrollment. However, any licensed foster parent is eligible to enroll in the policy at any time by contacting DCSInsurance@dcs.in.gov. The coverage includes damages to the home or property of the foster parents, harm done by the child to another party, and claims made against foster parents as agents of the State of Indiana.

Requirement of 465 IAC 2-1.5-9 Physical Facilities of the Foster Family Home; Bedrooms and Bathrooms

As stated in [465 IAC 2-1.5-9: Physical facilities of the foster family home; bedrooms and bathrooms](#), the requirements for bedrooms and bathrooms for foster family homes are as follows:

Sec. 9

- a. Bedrooms shall have adequate ventilation for the health, safety, and welfare of the child.
- b. Bedrooms shall be clearly identified as bedrooms. Living, dining, and other areas not commonly used for sleeping shall not be used for a bedroom. A bedroom located in a basement cannot be utilized for a child unless a waiver is granted by the department (Central Office Licensing Unit). The waiver must be specific to a particular child and

² Riley Children's Health: <https://www.rileychildrens.org/health-info/sleep-safety>

cannot be a blanket waiver. Factors to consider in granting a waiver include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Whether the bedroom is in an area of the basement that is finished,
 2. Whether the bedroom has two (2) easily accessible forms of egress to the outside, and
 3. The age (in terms of years and development) of the child that will be utilizing the bedroom.
- c. Children six (6) years of age and older, who share a room, shall be of the same sex. Children over twelve (12) months of age shall not share a bedroom with adults, except in the case of illness or developmental disabilities requiring close supervision and only with the approval of the department (Central Office Licensing Unit). In no event shall a child ever sleep in the same bed as an adult.
- d. Each child shall be provided an individual bed and mattress that is:
1. Off the floor; and
 2. Of a size to accommodate the child.
- e. A crib that meets current safety standards consistent with federal safety regulations shall be used for a child under two (2) years of age:
- f. Appropriate bed linens shall be provided for the comfort of the child, taking into consideration the age of the child. Water resistant bed pads shall be provided for enuretic children. Bed linens should be changed as often as required for cleanliness and sanitation.
- g. A convertible sofa or other bedding of a temporary nature shall not be used except for temporary care and only upon approval of the department (the FCM will provide written approval).
- h. The foster family home shall have sufficient bedroom space to allow at least fifty (50) usable square feet for each child.
- i. There shall be either closet or wardrobe in addition to drawer space provided for each child's possessions.
- j. Sanitary bathroom facilities that provide privacy shall be available. Water provided for bathing shall be kept at a comfortable temperature.